KASHMIR

THE LAND OF STREAMS AND SOLITUDES

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GATE OF CHINOZ, SPAIN.

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KASHMIR

THE LAND OF STREAMS : : AND SOLITUDES : :

BY P. PIRIE WITH 25 PLATES IN COLOUR AND UPWARDS OF 100 BLACK AND WHITE ILLUSTRATIONS BY H. R. PIRIE

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TO

ALEXANDER HAMILTON PIRIE

FROM HIS DAUGHTERS

BADSHAH BAGH
LUCKNOW
INDIA

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The River Road

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I

PANDRINTHAN

THERE are other roads in Kashmir; roads like colonnades between serried ranks of poplar trees, the tall, slim, silvery pillars of the beautiful *populus alba*, or the sombre stateliness of the dark poplars of Lombardy; roads bordered by willows, or leading through marshy meadow-land, or carpeted with snowy petals from the blossoming branches of apple and pear and cherry trees, which make fragrant archways overhead; many and lovely are the roads of the Valley; but the road *par excellence* of Kashmir is the River, the Veth as the Kashmiris call it, which is an abbreviation

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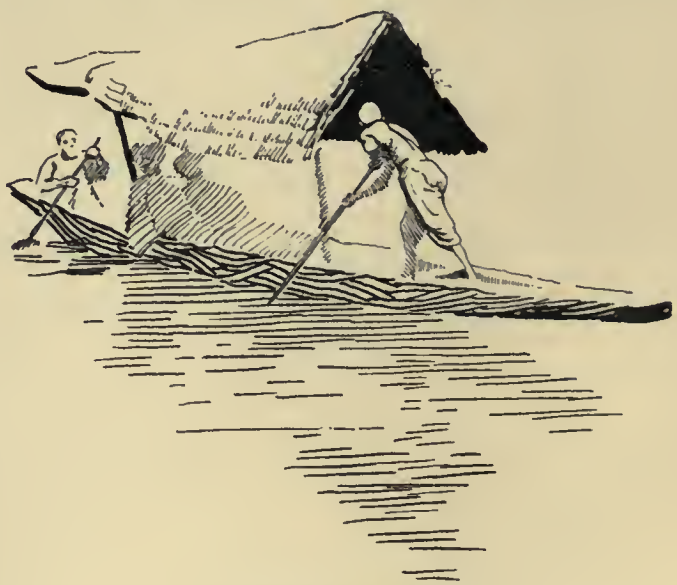
of *Vitasta*, its Sanskrit name, the *fabulosus Hydaspes* of the classic historians.

Up and down the wide and placid river go the flat-bottomed, slow-moving boats of the country—the wide grain-barges, the doongas with their roofs and sides of



A KASHMIRI HANSOM-CAB

matting, the deep-laden market boats, and the little fishing-boats so often drawn up near the bank with a wide net outspread, its wet meshes glittering in the sunshine like a dragon-fly's wing.

It is long since on the banks of the great river fair cities rose, enriched with the spoil of conquered countries; for it is long since the inhabitants of the Valley have had

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A POPLAR AVENUE

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kings of their own race. So long ago is it, and centuries of such dire oppression have intervened, that the glories of their kings and the grandeur of their cities are forgotten; and the peasants who tell you fabulous tales of the piles of ruin near their villages, or regard with an

A FRAGMENT OF A RUINED DOORWAY IN THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN AT MARTAND

almost contemptuous pity your interest in some old temple, seem not to realise that these are memorials of the ancient splendours of their own race.

The traces of the rule of these bygone kings have all but vanished, but the beauty and majesty of nature still remain, and make it easy to believe that the Valley was

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the cradle of demi-gods and heroes, one of the homes of the ancient Aryan conquerors of India, and the seat of a civilisation so ancient as to make the great Rameses seem comparatively modern, and

> The days when windy Troy
> Flamed for a woman's golden head

but a tale of yesterday.

THE MAIN STREET, SRINAGAR

Along the banks of the river, from the "City of the Sun," Srinagar, one may still trace the ruins of ancient cities and temples, to where, near its source, once rose the

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A ROAD IN SPRING

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most splendid shrine of all—Martand, the Temple of the Sun.

On the way up the river from Srinagar the first of these is the temple of Pandrinthan. Going by boat, one anchors just beyond a fine chinar-tree, and below a bank

PANDRINTHAN (THE TEMPLE STANDING IN A TANK)

fringed with willows. After landing, the Srinagar road is crossed, which here, and scarcely anywhere else, for a few paces, runs almost parallel with the river. Beyond the road lies a stretch of turf, then a grove of willows, under which the clover grows thick and green, while frequent little pools of water make of it almost a marsh.

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Picking a devious way through the pools among the willows, one comes to some fine and stately chinar-trees on the edge of a little tank; and there, in the middle of the tank, is the temple of Pandrinthan.

It is, perhaps, a morning in early May, clear and brilliant, after a stormy night. The air is keen and pure;

THE TAKHT-I-SULEIMAN

a glittering circle of lofty snow-peaks enclose one on all sides but the north, rising into an azure sky; the shadows on the Takht-i-Suleiman, the small, cone-shaped hill between this and the city, are of the warmest purple; and the rocky slopes of the hill at the foot of which lies Pandrinthan tower above one in bold outlines, unblurred by any tracery of trees, bare to the wind and sun.

And down in the tree-shaded hollow stands the little

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THE MAHARAJA'S TEMPLE
ON THE JHELUM

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hoary temple—sole relic of a former splendid capital of Kashmir. Very tired it looks, the little temple, cowering down into the protecting water, which twice at least in its history has saved it from destruction and the wrath of man. For when the old capital, the first Srinagar, which stood here and not on the present site of the city, was destroyed by fire in the reign of Abhimanyu, about the middle of the tenth century A.D., this temple was the only building that escaped; and again, five hundred years later, when the idol-breaker Sikandar was king, this was the only one of the temples of Kashmir which escaped his violence, "in consequence," says Ferishta, the scribe of Akbar, "of its foundation being below the surface of the neighbouring water."

But the burden of its thousand years weighs heavy on its shoulders, and it crouches beneath them in hopeless sadness, deserted and alone. All round it youth and the joy of living riot in the fine air and sunshine, in the soft spring greens of the young willows, in the tall chinars, the embodiment of vigorous life, glorying in the splendour of their new foliage. Surely the Moghul noble who planted these trees by the shrine of an alien faith must have been prompted to it by an instinct of pity for the little lonely temple.

The date of the founding of the city which once rose

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here is lost in the mists of antiquity. No doubt the great Asoka, Buddha's famous disciple, was known in its streets, and meditated on Nirvana within sight of the serene beauty of the encircling chain of snows. Here, probably, lived his son, who built the first temple, a Buddhist shrine, on the top of the Takht-i-Suleiman, about 200 B.C., which makes it still one of the sacred places of the followers of that faith, and visited even by wandering Lamas from Tibet. But the beauty and wiles of the serpent-goddesses lured him from his faith, and he fell back to the ancient rites of the worship of the Nagas, the snake-gods, while his temple has long since been destroyed and replaced by others.

The victories of the great Laltaditya, who reigned from 697-738 A.D., no doubt filled its streets with rejoicing and decked its houses with the spoils of India and Central Asia, though the new Srinagar had already for more than a hundred years been the capital.

The camps of the army of a later king, the conqueror and gambler, Shankara-Varman, who reigned about the end of the ninth century, his "900,000 foot, 300 elephants, and 100,000 horse," must have made of the whole neighbourhood a resplendent Champs de Mars.

Now no ghost of fluttering pennon or shining lance disturbs the peace of the valley. The silent hillside is

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strewn instead with broken fragments of fluted pillars and blocks of carved stone, with here and there a mound of shapeless ruin where once perhaps a palace stood. A little way up the hill is a huge stone fragment, said to be part of a colossal statue of Buddha that once towered here above the busy city. Round the grey stone feet,

THE HAPPY VALLEY

worn and defaced with the lapse of centuries, waves now a field of scarlet poppies, gay and debonair, heedless that their vivid beauty lasts but for a day.

The temple itself is small, only eighteen feet square, and made of great blocks of limestone. The roof is pyramidal and seems to have been jarred by an earth-quake shock, for though still keeping the general outline,

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the blocks of stone have gaps between them and are tilted out of their proper positions. The inside of the roof is said to be covered with sculpture classical in design, but as the temple stands in water at least four feet deep one must have a boat to see this. Its founder, Meru, the prime minister of King Partha, in the early part of the tenth century, dedicated it to Mahadeo; but the tank probably had some connection with the old religion of the country, the worship of the Nagas, a survival of the gloomy earth-worship still near to the hearts of the primitive hill-men, the cult of the divinities who inhabit mountain and stream, the senders of storms and floods, mysterious powers against whom men in these wild regions wage so unequal a strife.

This little temple never saw the best and most prosperous days of the city, for the seat of government had been moved to the new Srinagar 500 years before its founding. The decay of former greatness, ruin and disaster, fire and sword, these were all that its sculptured stones and cunningly wrought pillars were fated to see. It had stood but fifty years when a great fire destroyed the city around it. Already the supremacy of Hinduism was doomed, and the ancient and splendid Hindu kingdom of Kashmir was tottering to its ruin. Civil wars and *fainéant* kings hastened the end, till the last of the

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Hindu sovereigns fled before a Tartar invader early in the fourteenth century. It was left for a woman, a Hindu princess, Kuta Rani, a soldier's daughter, to raise an army and drive out the invader. But she stabbed herself to escape an unwelcome marriage, and with her

A SHOP-DOOR, SRINAGAR

ended the Hindu rule in Kashmir until, in 1819, the victorious generals of Runjit Singh entered the Valley. In the intervening five hundred years Mahomedan dynasties ruled Kashmir either directly or through viceroys, and the faith of Islam became the prevailing religion.

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But through all the changes that have swept the Valley and left their mark along the river-road in mosque and shrine, in stately garden or poplar avenue, none has ever rebuilt the old town, and the little temple still stands forlorn, emblem of age and desolation.

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II

UP THE RIVER

FROM the desolation of Pandrinthan, its hoary temple, and traces of a vanished city, one returns to the river and is met by its sparkling, breeze-stirred surface, the brilliance of the sun of May, and the sweet singing of many larks overhead; while the clear liquid note of the golden oriole, on the branch of a chinar-tree, reminds one that this cool, song-filled morning is not, after all, of Europe, but a part of the most romantic region of the mysterious East.

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Going up the river by boat is a mode of progress that combines many attractions. To begin with, all considerations of time are forgotten. It is as if Time were not. This is not because the speed is such as to annihilate space and time, for the average pace of a boat going upstream might, perhaps, be described as glacial. But because time simply does not exist on the river, and "non numero nisi serenas" might well be one's motto almost anywhere in this charmed Valley.

Near Srinagar, it is true, the midday gun from Akbar's Fort on the hill of Hari Parbat knocks at the gate of consciousness with a fleeting reminder of the trammelled world you have left behind you; the poor deluded world which thinks itself so progressive and enlightened, fettered by time-tables and bound to a dreary treadmill of either pleasure or duty. Besides, no person of sense remains in Srinagar, since there are so many hundred miles of alluring jungle in which to forget Time.

On the river-road one may learn with the French philosopher, "quelle petite place il faut pour la Joie, et combien peu son logement coûte à meubler."

If we have no Time we are rich in sunrises and sunsets, glorious noondays, golden afternoons, and nights filled with the bewitching sadness of moonlight or the glittering mystery of star-lit skies. The days uncounted

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by measured and classified hours are a majestic procession of changing skies and lovely landscapes, whose beauty seems to be heightened by each varying effect of cloud or sunlight that passes over them in this magic atmosphere.

The Kashmiris themselves have a picturesque way of

THE SHIKARI

talking, which shows what are for them the true divisions of Time. Official calendars and rigid limitations of months and dates are little heeded by them, and the months are counted by the flowers or fruit that come in them.

"In the time of flowers," meaning apple and pear

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blossom, says the boatman, "it is always like this, clouds and rain, and sometimes, also, sunshine."

"In the time of mulberries," says the fisherman, "you will catch many fish at Sumbal."

"When the maize is ripe," says the shikari, "the bears come down from the jungle."

No one hurries on the river. The boat is towed up-stream at an average rate of something under two miles an hour, so I am told by those who have not lost the habit of measuring things by ordinary standards even in Kashmir. But this lack of haste is one of the great charms of the journey. To most people the idea of travel is fraught with tiresome associations of hurry and dust and noise, added to the desolating certainty that one will be snatched relentlessly away from all the charming places one has brief glimpses of, and where one longs to linger. The contrast of this leisured progress, without dust, without hurry, without noise, one's own pleasure its only law, its only sound the ripple of the water under the prow of the advancing boat as it glides smoothly on, is as delightful as it is at first bewildering. For it seems hardly natural to get so near to lofty snow-covered peaks and into the heart of the hills without exertion or labour.

For fine weather the doonga is undoubtedly the best

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AN AUTUMN EVENING

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boat to travel in, for the strips of grass matting which are one's walls can be rolled up, and one lives practically *en plein air* from morning till night, and can sleep without letting them down, which has all the advantages without the drawbacks of sleeping outside. In stormy and cold weather, it is true, the doonga is perhaps not an

A COUNTRY BOAT

ideal abode, since, if the rain is heavy, all the mats have to be fastened down, and one is condemned to almost total darkness. It is also no easy matter to keep warm in a doonga when snowstorms are raging within fifteen miles of one, and cold and piercing winds sweep the river; the only possible way to be comfortable is to take violent exercise on the river-bank.

In spite, however, of these disadvantages, there is a great deal to recommend life in a doonga to any one

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whose horizon is not bounded by ideas of "solid" British comfort, and who can enjoy a little roughing it. Besides, on a house-boat, one is haunted by the consciousness that one is a blot on the landscape, and entirely out of keeping with the surroundings; while its weight and clumsiness make some of the loveliest reaches of the river impossible to it. The doonga is certainly picturesque, and adds to all the other attractions of the river the charm of a novel sort of Bohemianism.

On one's own doonga one is an autocrat and absolute. The Kashmiris, according to Sir Walter Lawrence, "like and admire stern determination in a ruler"; also "they yearn for personal rule centred in one." All this it is in one's power to give them, and it is nice to think one may be a tyrant to the satisfaction of everybody, and to be able to go on or stop anywhere as the caprice of the moment may suggest, without consulting any one or taking any undue thought for the morrow. Another of the delights of life in a boat is that travelling no longer means packing up. The innocent enjoyment of scattering one's belongings about in the most convenient manner is menaced by no horror of having hastily to collect and stow them away.

While the boat is on the move it is usual to establish oneself on the front deck, which should be decorated with

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whatever flowers are in season—in May the purple or white iris.

The river, which shares in the universal disregard of Time, covers as much ground as it is possible for a river to do in its course from Islamabad, where it begins, to Baramulla, where it ceases, to be navigable. It is as if it were loath to leave the Valley, a disposition which it is impossible to blame or even criticise; besides, the innumerable windings forbid monotony in the prospect, while the river, like a conscientious guide, shows you from every possible point of view the lovely changing landscape.

It is with a dream-like feeling one goes up the wide, calm river; following its thousand windings, one passes in and out of all varieties of climate, sunshine and shadow chasing each other through the day. It is a sunny, brilliant morning; the light breeze made by the motion of the boat sets the delicate iris petals fluttering, and the water ripples gaily against the prow; while before one's eyes a magnificent and ever-changing panorama unfolds itself, dominated by a splendid succession of lofty snow-peaks, the serene and silent guardians of this enchanted land. Later we pass out of the sunlight, and the prevailing tints of the afternoon are violet and indigo under the heavy clouds which hang over the Valley;

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while an occasional gleam of sunlight brings out soft and lovely hues on the lower hills. To the right the Pir Panjal range towers stern and white against a background of stormy sky, while, far in front, rises a lovely range of snowy peaks touched to pale rose and gold in the rays of the setting sun, which linger on them, turning the shadowed slopes below to the transparent violet of the amethyst, the whole like some fair dream standing at the gate of sunset, of such exceeding beauty that one can hardly believe in its permanence or reality; while, to accentuate its distant, smiling loveliness, we ourselves move under an outstretched wing of storm, the dark river mirroring the heavy clouds above.

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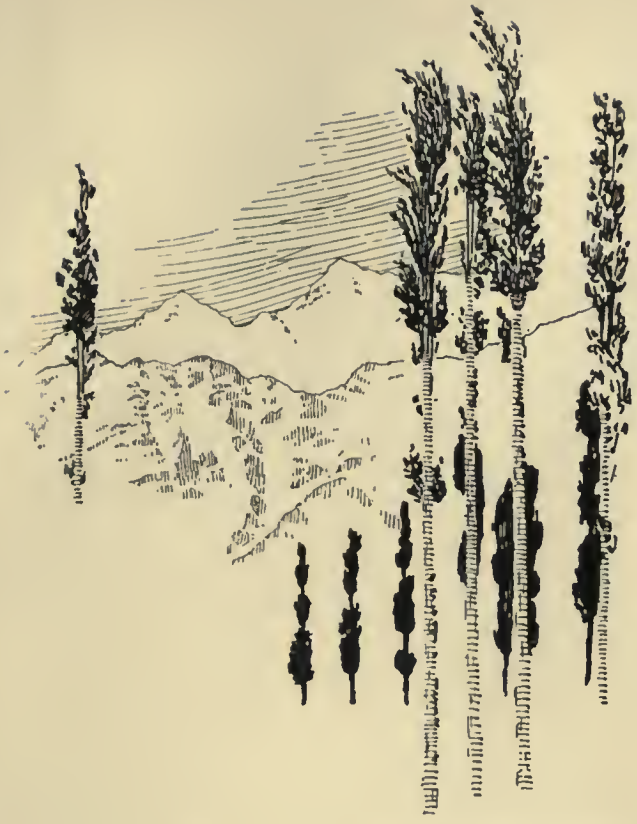

III

THE END

Enough for me in dreams to see
And touch thy garment's hem ;
Thy feet have trod so near to God
I may not follow them.

RUDYARD KIPLING. *To the True Romance.*

THE end of the river-road, for those who are handicapped by house-boats, is at Khanbal—the port, as the guide-books call it, of Islamabad, and about a mile from it by road. A charming road, one

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of the poplar-bordered avenues of Kashmir; young poplars whose stems of silver-grey frame succeeding pictures of lovely landscape; a foreground of marshy rice-fields, pools of water in spring and early summer, faithful mirrors of hill and cloud and sky, while in autumn they are patches of bronze and delicate green, rose-pink, and scarlet. Beyond them on the right, across the rich meadow-land, is the range of the Pir Panjal on one side, and, on the other, the steep, frowning wall, through a gap in which comes the Liddar. Closing in the end of the valley are, first, the bare little peak round which lies Islamabad, and then, across the level *karewah*, the lovely, rounded slopes of the Achebal Hills, the steep, wooded heights which shut in the Nowboog Valley, and, beyond, the snowy summits across which lead the passes to Kishtwar, the Wardwan, and high Zanskar.

But, if in spite of the well-meant advice of friends, you have risked the discomforts of a doonga, for you the end of the river-road will be far beyond Khanbal, through about two miles of devious windings and sharp corners, where the current runs like a mill-race, to little islands of young willows which break up the river—now narrowed to about thirty yards from bank to bank—into numerous channels. You may take your boat right up

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till its bow almost reaches the first of the tiny islands, where the green bank curves in a miniature harbour just large enough for your boat, and there you may anchor, secure in the reflection that no one can be before you on the river.

AMONG THE WILLOWS

Instead of other boats with chattering servants and loud-voiced manjis, you have a wide curve of the river absolutely to yourself; and, over and above this, a nice bit of land, an apple orchard, with one enormous chinar-tree.

> Sweet peace and deep, the chequered sward
> Beneath the ancient mulberry-trees.

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A world of vivid green, streaked and dappled with a sunlight so golden in this wonderful soft air, that it lies on the velvet turf like a solid thing. From your boat you look out on the soft grey-green foliage of the willows rising into a sky faintly blue or flushed at sunset to palest rose; beyond the willows is a dark wall of Lombardy poplars, marking the Vernag road, and for a background the hills, slopes of pale emerald-green merging into a haze of blue below the ultimate line of snows.

Between the islands runs the river, purple where dark rocks rise in its way, running with bronze and golden gleams over the sand and lighter pebbles, deep blue where it reflects the sky. Here its clear waters and little rapids make you realise at last that it is a mountain stream. The low murmur of the current where it runs deep and strong by the opposite bank, the merry ripples dancing over the frequent shallows, the lapping of its wavelets against the side of your boat speak a most enchanting language, blotting out all the world you have left behind you and luring you on to follow further the road by which it has come.

But it is a most elusive river, and it comes by a thousand roads—ten thousand, said the ancients.

Some of them—the nearer and more obvious ones, to the springs of Achebal and Bawan and Vernag, where

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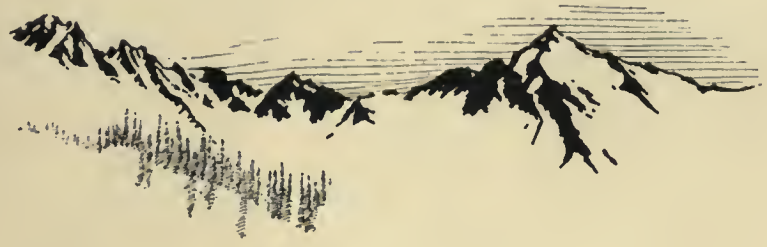
Jehangir's Queen wrote, "*This fountain has come from the springs of Paradise*"—have been favourite paths of pleasure for the rulers of the Valley from the time of the Moghuls, with the magnificence of their summer courts, to the English tripper of the present day. By short and easy marches, along good roads, you may go to these famous springs surrounded by temples and the ruins of palaces and pleasure-grounds, where the captive



OUT OF THE BEATEN TRACK

water is led by artificial channels and confined in masonry tanks, swarming with the shamelessly greedy sacred carp.

But charming as these famous roads may be, it is never of them that the dancing ripples sing. If you listen to their eager, swift beguiling, they will lead you very far, by ways of exquisite beauty and utter desolation, till from the splendid silence of shining slopes of snow you look on the white grandeur of the inaccessible heights dividing the watersheds of the Indus and Jhelum, and

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you may even "think scorn of that pleasant land," the easy, much-frequented ways of the Valley.

At first, perhaps, you will be led through dewy pasture land, where the pine trees are wreathed with wild climbing roses, whose white and pink blossoms overhang the stream, such a stream as the Spanish poet wrote of—

A MOUNTAIN STREAM

Laugh of the mountain, lyre of bird and tree,
Pomp of the meadow, mirror of the morn,
The soul of April, unto whom are born
The Rose and Hyacinth, leaps wild in thee.

Later you will go through the deep "green glooms" of the still fir forests, opening out sometimes into sunny

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glades, where, over the fallen tree-trunks, breaks a wave of forget-me-nots of the palest blue, and here the stream flashes down in a spray of silver, or lies deep in swirling, jade-green pools, its voice no longer the whisper in which first it breathed the secrets of its distant source, but a

THE END OF THE RIVER-ROAD

triumphant chant of rejoicing, filling the lonely forest and drowning all lesser music.

It will lead you higher, to where, above the level of the birch trees, lie silver meadows, frosted thick with small white anemones, where the stream flows through rocky gorges, swept always by an icy wind, which adds its voice to the torrent, grown almost too awe-inspiring in these desolate heights for mere human understanding.

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Higher still it will lead you, till, under the deep sapphire sky, you stand in a vast snowy silence, where even the voice of the water is hushed. Far down under the snow it listens, perhaps, to a music too rare and exquisite for mortal ears, to translate afterwards some syllables of its magic to the world below.

Those who have followed up one of the mountain streams which lead you into the heart of this "Abode of snow," will understand how like treachery it would seem to disclose an exact route, to measure and map and lay out marches through all that loveliness which was for you alone, and into which you wandered almost by accident. If your Fate is good and you can face the difficulty, you will find for yourself the end of the river-road.

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A Road to the North

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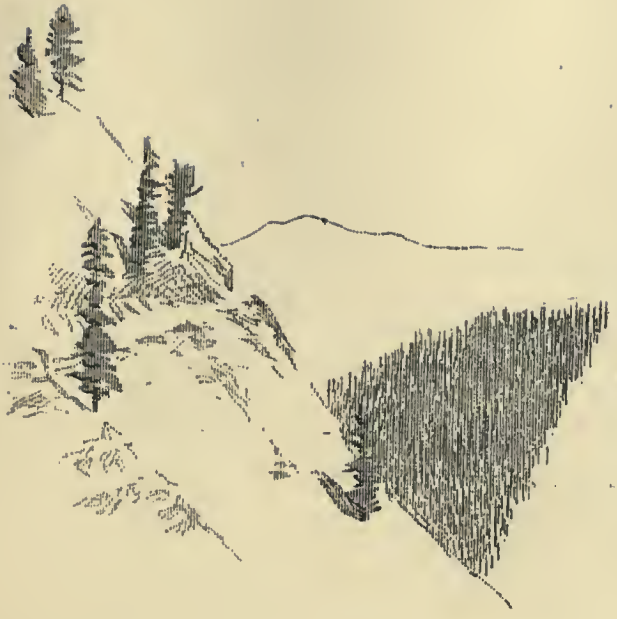

A ROAD OF THE NORTH

Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence.—WORDSWORTH.

THE Gilgit road is one about which there is no uncertainty. In this it is unlike most other roads of Kashmir, which have a habit of masquerading in many disguises. Sometimes the road is the bed of a mountain torrent; wet or dry, it is all one; you follow it about on slippery stepping-stones, or fallen tree-trunks, or hang on to a projecting cliff, or, *tout*

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simplement, wade through the water, as necessity or inclination may dictate. Sometimes it is a wide, upland meadow, flower-starred, lovely. Sometimes, you would say, the moraine of a glacier, for you scramble with difficulty up a slope of sixty degrees, over rocks so large and so hard to manage that you are reminded of pictures of people ascending the Pyramids, but a reassuring tiffin-coolie tells you, "*This* is the pony-road." The coolie-road, which he also points out, is a toboggan-slide, down which it is correct to glissade, and up which nobody goes if they can help it. Sometimes it is a dark fir forest, sometimes a much-crevassed glacier, sometimes a trackless snow-slope; all these, and many more, varied, and lovely, and only the more enchanting for their difficulty, are known as roads in Kashmir.

But the Gilgit road has no compromises nor disguises, no trifling nor turning aside. There is a solidity and directness, a plain straightforwardness about it, that is brusque and British, and typical of its builders.

It is persistently unaware of all other possible interpretations of the word "*road*." It is a Road, and no more; and never less. Scenery and sentiment are foreign to its nature; if it were possible to do so it would no doubt avoid both. It is sternly and simply a means of getting from one place to another, and it is a most excel-

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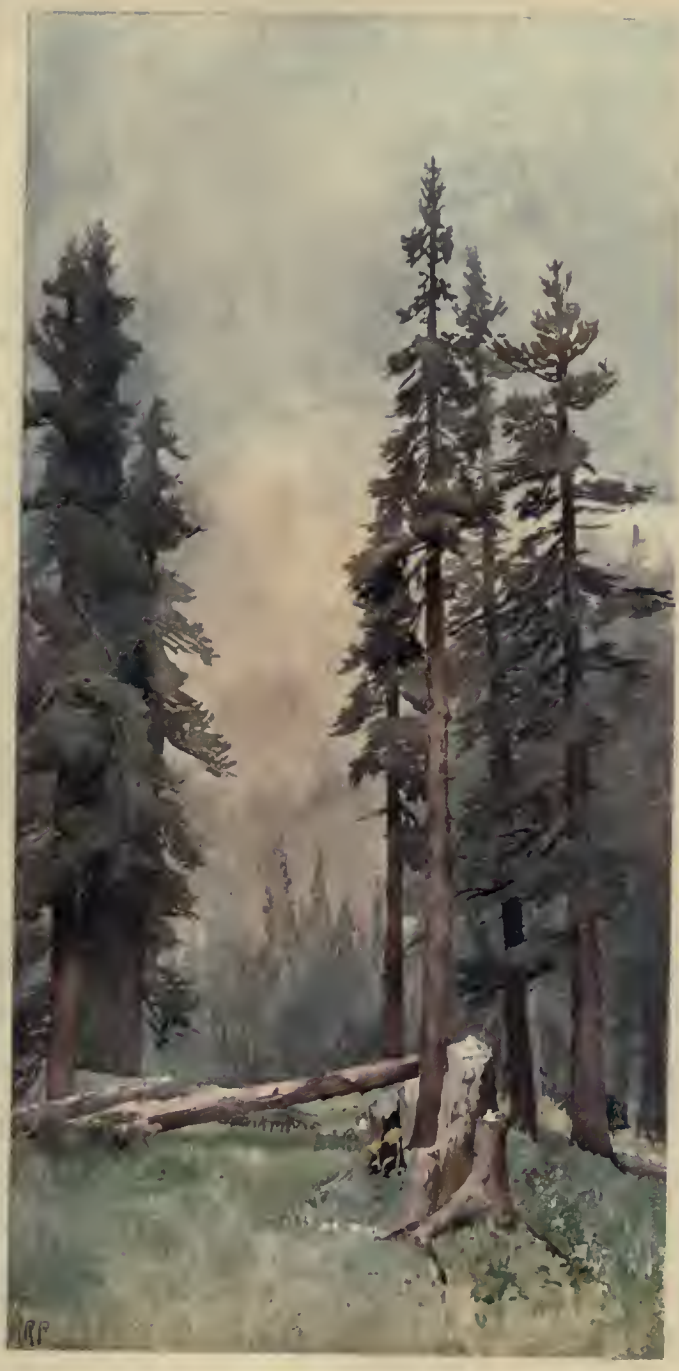

A TRACK THROUGH
THE FOREST

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lent means; a military road which has overcome such difficulties in its making as no other road in the world has had to contend with. For besides the great forces of Nature arrayed against it, impregnable cliffs, rivers in flood, avalanches of snow in winter, and of rocks the rest of the year, snowstorms and freezing winds meaning certain death to those overtaken by them, with famine ever in waiting to swoop down on the workers should

CAMEL TRANSPORT

any one blunder or delay in sending up the long caravans of grain from the far-distant base:—besides all this, the first rough outline of the road had to be laid by armed labourers in the face of hostile tribesmen, a brave, if cruel enemy, posted on the heights above, and only kept from annihilating the workmen by the fire of the little mountain-guns which have helped so well to keep the road. Such is the *new* road, now, I believe, about twelve years old.

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But even the Gilgit road cannot entirely escape the charm of Kashmir; and it is, in spite of itself, beautiful. A stern and awful beauty, of serried ranks of enormous mountain masses, of vistas of gigantic snows, of the sources of great rivers, and of a wonderful purity of atmosphere; while from the first hestitating whisper of spring to the final glowing triumph of autumn it knows the gentler beauty of flowers, a most lavish profusion of colour and fragrance on all the mountain slopes.

The Gilgit road has never been a road of pleasure like the Pir Panjal, but always a road of war, or the fear of war. It is a road with a past—a long and tragic past of oppression and tyranny, of treachery and murder, of suffering and horror, of the forced labour of the slave, the misery and torture of heat and thirst and hunger on worn and exhausted humanity; of pitiless cold and storm; of the unavailing strife of man against the silent, relentless denials of Nature.

It is a road which, in the old days, took a tremendous toll of the lives of men. "The first time I went on it," an old Kashmiri transport driver told me, "when I was a boy of sixteen, I wept much, because on both sides of the road lay so many dead men."

Even now, in the days of the new road, should a sudden snowstorm sweep through the passes, the road

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VILLAGERS OF TARSHING ON THE ROAD FROM TARSHING TO RUPAL, NEAR ASTOR

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over them will be strewn with the corpses of ponies and camels; while in winter the post-runners always go at the risk of their lives; the snow keeps its own secrets, but in the spring it is not the bodies of animals only that are found under the drifts on the road.

At the best of times one comes to places where the

THE WATCHERS (A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF A LINE OF LADEN BAGGAGE-PONIES)

wheeling vultures gather over a baggage-pony which has succumbed to the hardships of the road. And there are still terrible bits near Gilgit where all the resources of science are powerless; after any great storm the road is carried away, and can never be mended without loss of life.

It is a jealously guarded road. Armed sentries keep

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its costly bridges, while to travel on it at all a passport from a very high authority indeed is necessary, and much of it is irrevocably closed to travellers.

Over it, white and gigantic, towers Nanga Parbat, or Deomir, "*the Home of the gods*," as the people call it who live near by, 26,629 feet of snow.

You see it from the top of every pass; and at the end

THE LAST TREES

of the steep, high-walled gorges of the road it looms up, a white barrier, so incredibly high that it seems the mirage of a snow mountain floating in the air. Everything on this road is on so stupendous a scale that, as one rides day after day through these mountains, one is dazed by their vastness and beauty, their solemn desolation and

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AN OUTPOST OF

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NANGA PARBAT, THE FOURTH HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN THE WORLD

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silence, everything in one that feels is steeped in the sense of it, while

> the fretful stir
> Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,

are forgotten as if they had never been, and nothing seems real that does not match their greatness and simplicity.

Below the first part of the road, flowing north to join the Astor, runs the Kamri River. It has some of the strength, the resistless power of the sea. Rising in fountains of clear green, breaking into snowy spray round the base of an enormous boulder, it might be the surf on a rocky coast. But no breaking wave of the sea, even in mid-ocean, has the delicate transparency of colour of this mountain stream.

There are pale, lovely blues, so clear that even the bluest sky seems dull and opaque beside their delicate brilliance. There are exquisite greens merging into blue on one side and violet on the other, so transparent, so cool, so edged and inlaid with the silver of the dancing foam that they are quite unapproachable in any medium. There are all the subtle, varying shades of colour made by the shadows of clouds and hills, which can be painted only by the sun on water crystal-clear, in an air as crystalline. And all this colour is vibrating with life and motion;

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for ever hastening forward with the force born of a descent of five thousand feet in about thirty miles.

It talks, too, with the voice of the sea. Near it you can hear no other sound but the thunder of breaking waves, the rush of the onward-flowing water. It speaks of power and of great content, a sure, unswerving purpose, an absolute certainty of achievement, underlying all its mad haste and uncurbed riot. It is resonant with rejoicing, the joy of a beautiful thing that comes from the beauty of the mountains and goes to the beauty of the sea. And it is deep with tragedy, the tragedy of severance and isolation, for its language is not for men to understand. The clue to it is lost; for surely once men knew, and it is this that draws one so irresistibly to listen to it; and it may be that some day men will know again, and this is why one is haunted by the sense of being on the verge of understanding while yet it ever escapes one, like a forgotten name which your lips just miss pronouncing.

But a day comes when one must leave the road, and go back to the ordinary, everyday world. The last camp is between two lakes. There is a gorgeous sunset and a golden western sky. But in the north is storm, a dark pall of cloud pierced with gleams of orange and scarlet, like a dome of smoke and flame. Behind the clouds, up

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THE FORT AT ASTOR

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there on that northern road, you know the great hills are whitening in the snowstorms which for six long months of winter will close the road.

UNITS OF THE IMPERIAL SERVICE CORPS CROSSING A PASS ON THE GILGIT ROAD IN OCTOBER

The outline of the hills is gradually merged in the piled clouds above them till they become a towering, fantastic outline of grey against a clear evening sky. Overhead comes a sound at first like rustling paper, turning to the long vibration of a violin string; a flight of duck

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going to their night's resting-place on the lake. The sound is often repeated; there must be thousands of them. At first you can see them, far up, long wavering lines against the sky, till at last in the fitful moonlight, veiled by clouds, they are a sound and no more.

They, too, have come from the North, though none but themselves know the secrets of their road.

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A MASTER OF HORSE

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A MASTER OF HORSE

HE carries his commission in a small book, something like an account-book, covered with brown paper. On its first page is printed a sort of oath of allegiance.

The idea of that gorgeous coronation in the Abbey, on which the eyes of the world were turned so few years ago, seemed incredibly remote and unreal here, north of one

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of the great passes leading to Gilgit, one of the gates to "the highest mountain system in the world."

But for splendour even the Abbey, ablaze with all the magnificence of that proud ritual, could scarcely have rivalled these great mountain gorges, hushed and solemn in the wonderful stillness which is at the heart of the higher hills. Autumn had passed in flame along the hill-sides, hurrying before the icy breath of swift-following winter, and so one walked in a world of gold and rose over which towered Titanic pinnacles, white and dazzling with the first heavy snowfall of the year.

It was here that he showed me his commission. After the oath of allegiance came his name—written by some one else—with below it his thumb-mark, for he could no more write his own name than the Barons of Runnymede. In this way he bound himself to be a loyal subject of the King across the water; the King whom neither he nor his have ever seen, but of whose greatness they have heard dim rumours, and whose name is a very real and sufficient symbol of Power, and, above all, of Justice—the *insaf* (justice) which he loves and longs for.

Further on in his book are other facts about him, the setting down of which has, one feels, a somewhat sinister meaning, for they will only be needed if an avalanche, or a sudden blizzard, or a stray shot, or any of the other

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chances of travel or of war in these wild regions should send him on his last long journey.

He has many of the qualities of a soldier, blind obedience to orders, and a fatalistic disregard of danger. He has also some much-cherished medals gained in frontier campaigns—Chitral and the Malakand.

THE ROAD IN A STORM

But he is not a soldier. He is only a transport-driver, a Kashmir merkaban, jemadar of eleven hundred ponies employed on the Gilgit road. He is a very small unit in the great scheme of the Imperial Service Corps; but on him and his like depends the fitness for an army of that road which is known as the "key of the Hindu Kush,"

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leading through the grandest mountain scenery in the world, flanked on one side by the largest glaciers outside of the Arctic regions, and on the other by the great Nanga Parbat and other giant snows.

As soon as the northern passes are open he is sent for to Bandipore on the Wular Lake, where the road begins. This may be any time from early in June to the middle of July, as it depends on the amount of the winter snowfall. From this time till October, when the passes are again closed by snow, his ponies carry grain up to Gilgit and the most remote outposts, provisioning them for a year, for, after the winter sets in, nothing can reach them.

He knows the road as the palm of his hand, for has he not gone backwards and forwards on it all his life?—even long ago, in the days of what was known as "the old road," which was no road at all, but often a death-trap, from which you only escaped if your *kismet* was good.

But Doran Sahib (Colonel Algernon Durand, the first "Warden of the Marches") changed all that, for he went along here, and made war on the Yaghistanis and ordered this fine new road to be made.

There are two gods he swears by. The first is "Doran Sahib," who, he firmly believes, can have no equal any-

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A GOOD ROAD NEAR GUREZ

where; and the second is Colonel Yielding, who, many years after, organised the splendid transport system of this frontier. Words fail to express his devotion to

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Yielding Sahib, for did he not treat the merkabans of Kashmir as if they were his own sons? Ponies, says my friend, were brought from Yarkand and the Punjab and many distant places to choose from, but of them all Yielding Sahib said the Kashmiri ponies were the best, and so none but Kashmir ponies work on this road. Did he not also make this alternative road, over the Kamri Pass, so that the ponies might have good grass?

From above Gurez as far as Gurikote of Astore there are two roads—one over the Burzil and the other over the Kamri Pass. The Burzil route is through bare rocky nullahs, and grass can only be got from the depôts at each stage; but this route is usually chosen by travellers and troops, as it is a better road, and there are log-huts at the stages. The Kamri Pass is higher than the Burzil, and so the road is not open quite as long as the other, but it leads over grassy mountain slopes, with nullahs opening out of it where there is splendid grazing, so the ponymen always go by it.

"Except in my own village, there is no better grass in the world," he says, with confidence. We are in a nullah on the Kamri route, where he is resting his ponies, and feeding them up for a few days. He is on his way to Gupis, half-way between Gilgit and Chitral, with rice, and is due to arrive there about the end of September.

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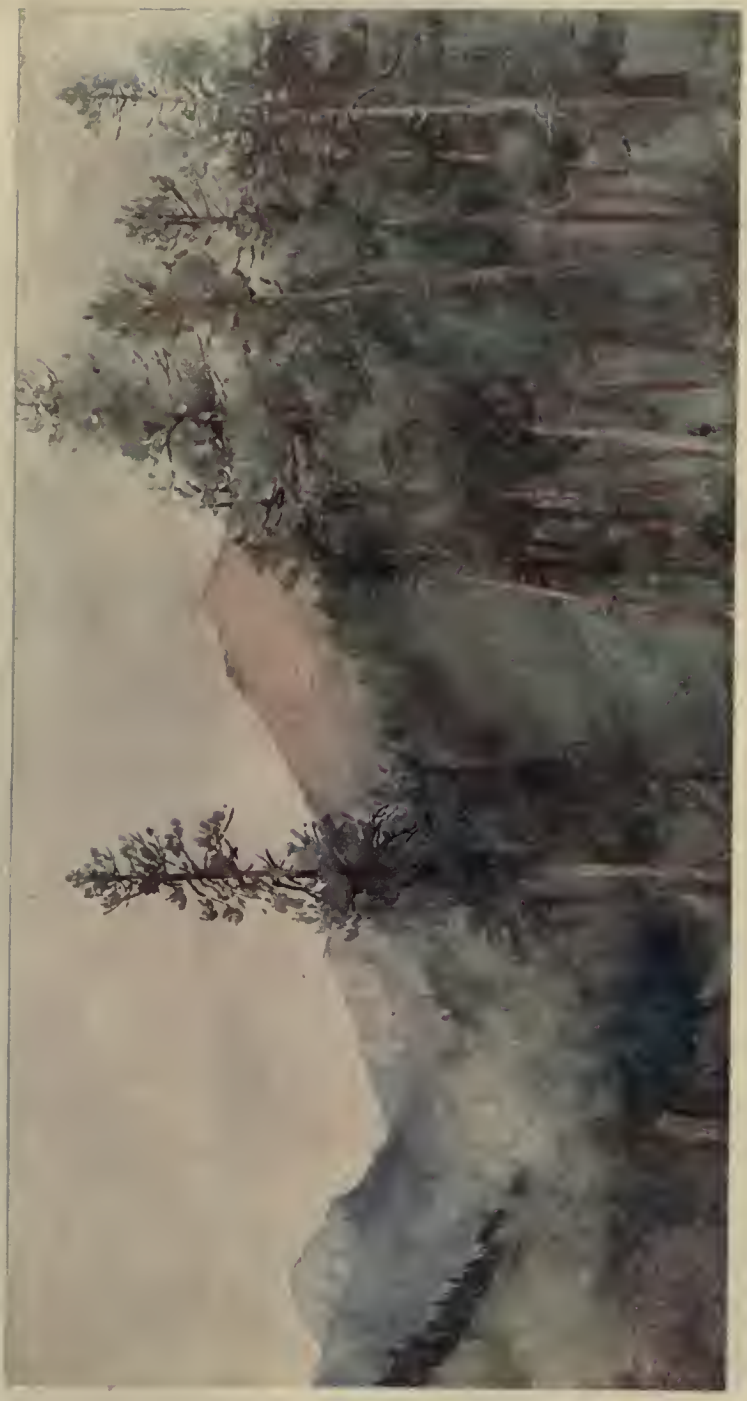

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He has just been down to Bandipore with a mountain battery, about which he seems very pleased, as he has been highly commended by one of the authorities for the way in which he did his work. The Kashmir Imperial Service troops are the only ones which have artillery, and

A CAMPING-PLACE

the splendid work these little mountain guns have done is written in the history of many a frontier campaign. He evidently thinks it a great distinction to go with the "tope-khana" (artillery).

His next trip will be with us. The passes will then be closed, his term of service over, and he will be free for his private affairs till next year. It is to arrange about

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dates that we have stopped here to interview him. For we are old friends. It is now September, and we made his acquaintance in May, when we happened to camp near his village, and he and his sons and his ponies took us and our belongings up to a snow-bound mountain lake, about 13,000 feet above sea-level. He is very proud of his ponies, and justly so, for they are really wonderful little creatures, and take their loads over ground where one feels it is only just possible to walk.

My riding pony he is especially proud of. He is not much to look at, stands 12.0, and is black and furry, but his paces are the easiest and his intelligence marvellous. In fact, he understands alpine climbing so much better than I do, that, in the worst places, I close my eyes and lay the bridle on his neck, while he daintily picks his way over the slope of a glacier, or the brink of a worse abyss than usual, up or down a rough flight of rocky steps, or round an abrupt and slippery corner with a raging torrent below. He has been, I am told, a renowned polo pony in his day, and he certainly still has a great liking for "riding off," and hates to see anything in front of him. He regarded me at first with deep suspicion, not being used to "sahibs," but learned to like apples with all the fervour of an acquired taste, and to allow his nose to be stroked. They bought him, they

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"AFTER POLO"
(Characteristic dress of the people of Astor, all of whom seem to play polo)

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told me, somewhere on the frontier, after the Tirah campaign, from a man whose name I cannot recall, except that it began with Sirdar, which is the title of the heir of a ruling chief in those parts. My ordinary, everyday vocabulary is too limited to understand the whole history of the transaction, which I am sure would be interesting, but I got the impression that the Sirdar was on the losing side, and thought it wiser to escape across the border, turning his belongings into money as far as possible. This hardly agrees with the horse's alleged age, which is six, but I could never get them to admit that he was a day older.

Our friend owns about fifty ponies, but only those which the Bandipore depôt have picked and branded go on transport service; with the others he does as he pleases, and since we made his acquaintance a certain number have been reserved for us. But he is an old man, he says, and will soon give up the road. And, by the goodness of God, he has sons who, even now, go with his ponies for him. Except for the service of the Sircar, he himself never goes any more with his ponies. All the rest of the year, even to go to the nearest village, he rides, he tells us; he never walks now.

His sons *toro*, as they call it, always on the road. They are big, stalwart creatures, who can do a march of

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twenty-six miles over a high and snowy pass without losing the elasticity of their stride, their optimistic view of life or the grave politeness of their manners, and will, at the end of it, attend to the needs of their ponies and bring wood from the forest for your camp fire with the greatest goodwill.

PREPARING FOR THE START

They and their father are all absurdly alike, belonging to the fair type of Kashmiri, with reddish hair, faces burned red by the sun, and grey or light brown eyes. The eldest is a born nomad, never in his village for more than a week or two at a time, and happiest when he is on the move with his ponies. He has been all over the

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frontier, to the Pamirs with some sportsmen, and knows besides all the passes of the Pir Panjal equally well.

The youngest, who is exceedingly nice-looking, very like the radiant David of Michelangelo, the shepherd-boy fresh from his fight with the giant, would prefer, he shyly affirms, the life of a *zemindar* (farmer). They have some fields and sheep at home in their village, and he

AT HOME

would like to stay at home and do *zemindari* and get the wool ready for making *puttoo* (the excellent homespun of Kashmir). But it has now become his *adut* (habit) to go with the ponies, and so he, too, is a nomad from necessity.

Their village is a very lovely one, with unusually lovely surroundings, even for Kashmir.

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It is a mountain village surrounded by fragrant forests of fir and pine, and gay with every wild flower of the year. Above it, grassy meadows climb to the snow-line, the best of grazing, where their ponies run wild through the spring and early summer, till the summons comes for Gilgit, getting into splendid condition and learning to be as sure-footed as the ibex, whose haunts are not far off.

These men think there is no place in the world like their village, and they are not far wrong. When they are crossing a pass which takes them out of sight of Kashmir, they stand for a moment facing the Valley and recite a prayer, and the same thing happens on the way back when they first come in sight of it again. They are very faithful sons of the Prophet; the old father seems to be exceedingly religious, and has brought up his household very strictly.

It is a hard life that they lead. For at least six months of the year they are on the move, sleeping in the open with no more shelter than a pile of pack saddles, in all weathers—rain, and hard frost, and heavy snow. But they seem thoroughly to enjoy it, and look as if it agreed with them.

Riding up the last slope of the last pass, on our way back to Kashmir from the north, we overtook and passed a string of about a hundred transport ponies and their

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drivers coming back unloaded, their service for the year over. The men were singing lustily; not very melodious, but very light-hearted and gay.

"Why are they singing?" we asked, in the true spirit of the globe-trotter, of the home-sick boy who was with our ponies.

"Are they not," he said, "going back to Kashmir?"

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THE ROAD OF THE EMPERORS

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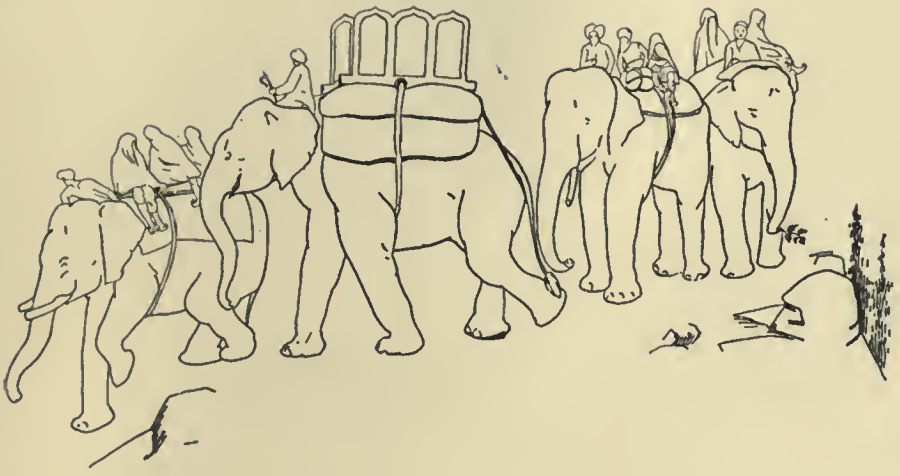

I

TO BHIMBER

IT is now a mere skeleton of a road; usually as elusive and dependent on the imagination as the skeleton army which haunts the battlefields of peace; the rocky, boulder-strewn outline of the highway along which the Moghul emperors once used to migrate to Kashmir, with "the gorgeous magnificence peculiar to the kings of Hindustan."

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It is marked by no "triumphs of modern engineering" like the new road in the Jhelum Valley; progress and civilisation, science and speed, in the shape of mail-tongas and invalid phaetons, have passed by on the other side. The steepness and height of the Pir Panjal barrier are not to be trifled with, and it is evidently a road which

CIVILISATION ON THE TONGA-ROAD

admits of no compromise between the ponderous elephant transport of "slow and solemn marching *à la Mogole*," and the air-ships of a levelled and communistic future.

In the meantime one can always walk. There are also baggage-ponies, which are available for transport, when the snow is not too deep on the pass, and the *lumbardar* of Bahramgalla chooses to make twenty-eight log-bridges in the space of five miles (knowing they will

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A GUJAR WOMAN IN MARCHING ORDER

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all be swept away by the next storm), or if the mountain torrents are in a fit state to be forded. In these circumstances the "pony-road" is considered "open." Otherwise there are coolies for one's baggage. To within five miles of the pass ponies can always go, but, as the road has no object unless one crosses the pass, its "openness" depends on those five miles and the state of the snowy defile above.

There is one psychological moment for this road: when the hot weather is not too far advanced to make the first marches unbearable, and, at the same time, has advanced far enough to make the pass practicable, and when the whole range of the Pir Panjal is still a gleaming vision of snowy summits filling the hot day's march towards them with alluring promises, and adding to every rose-flushed sunset or splendour of storm along the dark lower hills the ethereal beauty of a white ideal.

If you can seize this moment you will also find Spring on the other side of the Pass. A spring which has left behind somewhere in Northern Europe the sudden frosts and biting winds which made it a somewhat alloyed delight there, and has brought only its lovely, changing skies, its soft, veiled sunlight, and its *orfèvrerie* of all the most charming flowers of the year: purple iris, pale mauve violets sweeter than any garden ones, delicate waxen

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arbutus, little skies of forget-me-nots of the palest blue, and cloudy patches of white anemones lighting up the darkness of the still fir forests which cover the hills below the snow-line; while, as one nears the valley, spring dies out in a rosy mist of apple-blossoms against the delicate silver-grey of Kabul poplars, where it meets summer in wild rose-bordered paths among the lower levels.

It is impossible to give any date for this combination of circumstances as it probably varies each year; and it may only have happened this year because of the unusual winter. But if you are what the Kashmiri calls a *Kismet-wallah* you will no doubt cross the pass on the one and only day whether it comes in May or April.

But one ought to begin a road at the beginning, not at the end. This road begins at Gujrat, between Lahore and Jhelum. Here you leave the railway. It is a very unpretending beginning, of so little consequence that no mail train ever troubles to stop here. The most the mail will do for you is to leave your carriage behind at Lahore, where it shuffles aimlessly about from one line of rails to another, and, after much hesitation, chooses the very sunniest spot it can find to wait in from midday till "13.45" for the passenger train which will take you to your unimportant destination.

In the times of the Moghuls the road seems to have

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GUJAR WOMEN IN THE
PIR PANJAL FORESTS

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begun at Lahore, and it was usual to start "*at a prosperous hour*," with several thousand cavalry, infantry, and "*stirrup artillery*" for a bodyguard. On the first day "*the fortunate camp*" would "*alight at the garden of Dilamez and spend some days there.*" After fourteen days of camping varied by occasional marching, you would arrive at Gujrat. This place was founded by the Emperor Akbar, "*who, when he was proceeding to Kashmir, built a fort on the other side of the river, and made the Gujars, who had hitherto been devoted to plunder, dwell there. . . . The Gujars live chiefly on milk and curds and seldom cultivate land.*" (This is the account of it given by Akbar's son, the Emperor Jehangir, in his *Memoirs*.)

The people who keep herds of cattle are still called Gujars in Kashmir. They are a wandering race, spending the winter in Poonch or Jummu or the Punjab, and bringing their flocks and herds back to the pastures of Kashmir in the spring. Those of Poonch and Jummu seem a different race from the others, and are often very handsome. The women wear the picturesque dress of the North, full Turkish trousers and loose embroidered shirts, with a most becoming little red cap. They are tall and *élancées*, and exceedingly graceful, and the dull reds and smoky blues of their clothes are exactly the right colours for the forest paths on which you meet them.

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They seem mild and peaceable enough now, whatever their past may have been; perhaps the terrible prospect of having to give up their roving lives and the freedom of the forests to settle down in the cramped ugliness of a town was enough to reform them.

In the jungles of Kashmir you pass through three distinct zones. The first and lowest is the zone of the Gujars. Here, in the forests, you come to lovely, open meadows, called *margs*, where the hills forget to be as steep as usual. Under the shelter of a group of pines or in a shelf of the hillside will be a hut built of logs, its flat roof covered with beaten-down earth, the summer home of the Gujar. These huts are usually wrecked by the weight of the winter snow, and have to be rebuilt in the spring. The Kashmir peasants are wiser and build their houses with sloping roofs for the snow to slide off. But the Gujars either cling to the traditions of the past as to the shape of their roofs, or have as little forethought as the cricket in the fable, who sang and danced through the summer and trusted to luck and the hearth of the hospitable stranger for the winter. Or it may, perhaps, be easier to build a hut if you have a hillside for one of its walls and make your roof by fixing branches firmly in the side of the hill. This style of architecture has also the advantage of making it difficult for your

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A GUJAR'S HUT
IN KASHMIR

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enemy to find you, as it is very hard to distinguish it from the surrounding landscape, and, in the old days, evidently all the rest of the world were enemies, for the hereditary instinct of the Gujar still is to flee from a stranger.

Above the Gujars comes the zone of the *chaupans*, shepherds, whose flocks number thousands, and who lead them above the line of forests to "alpine pastures," grassy downs, where the green spreads with incredible rapidity following the line of melting snow, and patches of exquisite little alpine flowers, short-stemmed to escape the fury of the winds, come up in a day in swift response to the first touch of the sun.

The third zone is the place of the goat-herds, and this is so high that it climbs over the snow-line and goes down on the other side, leaving the pleasant pastures of Kashmir far behind for the steep valleys of Maru Wardwan, and the stern heights of Suru and the borders of Ladakh, and Baltistan. In the passes leading north you may meet them taking their flocks over, the women and children bringing up the rear with the stragglers, the lame, the disabled, and the latest arrivals, the very tiniest of all carried carefully over the snow with a bleating mother in the wake. They are a very pretty sight these gentle fellow-travellers, but their roads lead too near the

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haunts of ibex and red bear for them to be welcomed by sportsmen.

On the Pir Panjal road one sees all these different types, all on the move towards their summer quarters, but each herd usually goes by a different track and there are many passes used only by them for their yearly immigration. For the ordinary traveller the first stage is

IN THE THIRD ZONE

Bhimber. From Gujrat to Bhimber the road runs, like the road to Camelot, through

> Long fields of barley and of rye
> That clothe the wold and meet the sky.

It goes due north towards the low foothills, which are a grey silhouette against a pale grey sky, the higher hills hidden in a heat haze.

Bernier, the Frenchman who went to Kashmir with

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FELLOW-TRAVELLERS

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the Emperor Aurangzebe, talks about "*burning Bember.*" "*We are encamped,*" he says, "*in the dry bed of a considerable torrent, upon pebbles and burning sands, a very furnace.*"

But if you go to Kashmir at the proper time of year the country round Bhimber will be delightfully green,

BY EKKA TO BHIMBER

and you will not be so unwise as to camp in the unshaded, glaring bed of the river. Most probably you will not be in tents at all, but in the cool stone bungalow with trees near by and a little garden, which seems meant by the *mali* (gardener) for a vegetable garden, but where

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nothing really flourishes except small pink roses, very double and very scented.

The Bhimber one comes to now is a sleepy little town: absolutely silent from an hour before noon till about four; and, in the cool hours of the morning and evening, filled with the drowsy creak of Persian water-wheels, when the women come down for water, through the flowering pomegranate-trees, from the flat-roofed, dull-red houses under the hill.

The sole trace of the vanished glories of the Bhimber of Moghul days is the ruined serai. "*The splendid serais of the Pir Panjal route*" were mostly built by a Moghul viceroy, Ali Mardan Khan, who spent £10,000 yearly on his journey to Kashmir, and who had such a magnificent way of doing things that he was supposed to possess the philosopher's stone. Many of these serais are still in very good preservation, and those that have fallen into decay seem to have been helped to it by the hand of man. Their massive, arched gateways, their battlemented walls and turrets, their size and strength, give them somewhat the appearance of mediæval fortresses, and they are magnificent relics of the empire of the Moghuls, of whom only the greatest, Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jehan, and Aurangzebe, visited Kashmir.

Part of the serai at Bhimber has been rebuilt recently

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to be used as a treasury and other Government offices and as quarters for some of the officials. The small, smug, squared neatness of the modern part contrasts pitifully with the great masses of roughly hewn stone, grand even in ruin, of which the former building was made; and the uncompromising plainness of the new doorways, mere

IN THE SERAI AT BHIMBER

square holes in the walls, seems more sordid than ever beside the noble lines of the old Moghul arch.

Bhimber has forgotten the marvellous summer courts of the Moghul days, the five hundred elephants and thirty thousand coolies who must have created considerable excitement in the town (and perhaps not entirely agreeable excitement) as they passed through in the train

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of an Emperor who was supposed to be "marching light."

In these degenerate days through the almost deserted streets of the little town passes only an occasional Englishman, trudging along, with his modest camp equipment carried by five or six baggage-ponies, while the town wakes up to a languid, momentary interest, somewhat less languid, perhaps, if the travellers are Englishwomen, and then sinks back into its former attitude, drowsing at the foot of the hills: the deserted gateway of the old Imperial road.

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II

Mes enfants, dans ce village,
Suivi de rois, il passa:
Voilà bien longtemps de ça.—BÉRANGER.

ON the first four marches out of Bhimber you desire earnestly, like Falstaff, to be "Diana's foresters; gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon." But shade is mostly absent, especially for the first few miles, and marching by moonlight is sometimes impracticable. A sun which begins to be fierce almost from the moment it rises; a rocky road without shade or beauty, reflecting the heat and glare; hillsides black and bare, rising in smooth, round ridges like iron pontoons, and a steady climb over them for five shadeless,

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gasping miles; then a descent through a valley, green and cultivated, and pretty enough, but almost equally hot :— that is the history of the first march.

The next day is much better. The bare hills give place to low, pine-covered spurs, and, in the valley, one follows the course of a little river, with quantities of

A SHADY BIT

pink oleander growing along it. It was perhaps here that the Emperor Jehangir wrote: "*I marched the whole way through the bed of a river, in which water was then flowing, and the oleander bushes were in full bloom and of exquisite colour, like peach blossoms. . . . I ordered my personal attendants, both horse and foot, to bind bunches of the flowers in their turbans, and I directed*

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that the turbans of those who would not decorate themselves in this fashion should be taken off their heads. I thus got up a fine garden."

This Emperor was a great lover of Nature, and had besides a highly artistic temperament. His court may have found it rather trying sometimes if he often insisted on their sacrificing themselves *pour être belle* as on this occasion; but it was not then the age of tolerance anywhere. In Europe they still burned heretics at this time.

In his diaries of his journeys to Kabul and Kashmir, in the midst of accounts of wars and rebellions, he never forgets to notice any new flower he comes across, or a specially fine group of trees, or perhaps a river, like the Nain Sukh in Badakshan, which, he says, the redoubtable Sultan Mahmoud of Ghazni named "*the eye's repose.*"

In the school histories of one's youth the Emperor Jehangir is passed over somewhat hurriedly, and one only gathers the impression that he is the sort of person of whom the less one hears the better. But his own memoirs paint a very interesting and original character. He seems to be without that proud consciousness of his own merits which rather disfigures the great Akbar. The calculating selfishness of Shah Jehan and the cruel bigotry of Aurangzebe are not his failings. It is rather striking that he never makes any attempt to conceal the amount

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of wine he drank; he tells you the exact measure, how many times a day it was brought to him, and what a bad effect it had on his health; and he is naïvely grateful to the Empress Nur Jehan—the Light of the World—for persuading him gradually to reduce his allowance till it came to a more moderate number of cups a day.

Perhaps it was excess of temperament, an unpardonable fault in a king, that led to his downfall. If only he had been born poor and in Italy, he would probably have been a shining light of the great *cinque cento*.

From other sources one learns that he had many great qualities as a general and a ruler, especially in his youth, before his fatal vice had developed. In the annals of Akbar's time, by Ferishta and others, one constantly finds that whenever there was trouble or revolt in any part of Akbar's empire, "Prince Selim"—as he was then called—was always sent for to settle it, and Prince Selim usually did it, and successfully.

He was also the keenest of sportsmen. None of the other emperors seems to have had such a passion for *shikar* as this one, and the Pir Panjal in his day must have abounded in game of all sorts. It is only comparatively recently, within the last twenty years, that ibex and markhor and barasingh have been practically exterminated in the Pir Panjal range.

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At the end of this march one comes to Naoshera, a small and pretty village in a bend of the River Tavi. There is here a very fine Moghul serai, in much better preservation than the one at Bhimber. The narrow, crooked village street, paved with cobble-stone, climbing past the buttressed walls and deep archways of the old serai, has a very mediæval air; one would say Vitré or Le Mans, were it not for the domed mosque on the other side of the road, and the passers-by in the picturesque Punjabi dress.

On the next march there are lovely glimpses of the distant snows of the Pir Panjal, now only five marches ahead. The way, if you walk by the coolie-road, is at first a very rough short cut, through a curious jungle of cactus; it grows so thick that neither wind nor sun reaches you as you climb the stony, steep little track to the top of the spur. After this come little lanes edged with flowering pomegranates and white wild roses; a river that begins to have the transparent emerald colour and the *verve* and dash of a mountain-stream; and, later on, there are pine-woods with, among them, a tall, flowering shrub something like an American locust-tree. Its flowers grow in erect clusters, lovely, vivid splashes of transparent yellow against the blurred background of the pines. This march takes you to a place which every one pro-

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nounces differently. The old historians write it Tinguescq, but the modern pronunciation sounds like "Chingiz."

The view from here is lovely. The river runs far below, white with foam in the silver-grey of its pebbly bed; on either side, closing in its valley, are dark wooded

A PLACE TO DREAM OF

hills; and, at the far end, the snows of the Pir Panjal. The bungalow, small, and cool, and breezy, is on a high cliff above the river, but it is the ruined Serai near by which is entirely fascinating.

Here, as the last colours of sunset faded from the sky, and the snows turned to ashen grey, and the chill mountain wind fluttered the gay silks and muslins of the poor

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shivering ladies of the Empress' suite, they brought the body of the Emperor Jehangir. It was fitting that he should die here, the last camp from which, on the way down, one sees the snows of Kashmir; this Emperor, who, when he was dying, and they asked him if he wanted anything, turned his face to the wall, away from the wearisome sight of all those people, time-serving, cruel, grasping and ignoble, insincere and self-interested all, among whom he must have known that it was impossible for an emperor to find a real friend, turned away to close his eyes and dream of the fair, wild places that he loved, as he answered "Only Kashmir."

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III

Better also is the sight of the eyes than the walking of the soul.—The Preacher.

ONE should leave Chingiz in the cool of dawn, before the moon has effaced itself in the slowly brightening sky, while the stars still linger big and brilliant over the sharply pointed peaks of snow, and before the first ray of sunlight lies red on the western gate of the Serai.

For it is a hot road to Rajaori and a long one, in spite

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of the smoothness of the way, with its fragrant border of white wild roses, past little hill villages, and through barley fields, instead of the jungle paths of the last marches. Rajaori is on a river, a river which has to be forded before you reach your camping-ground. Once some one was inspired to make a bridge over it, but he apparently got discouraged after building one very massive stone pier, which still stands there, while the town people wade backwards and forwards as they have always done. The current is very strong, especially when the river is swollen by the melting snow on the Pir Panjal, and also after storms, and the river sometimes cannot be crossed for two days at a time, when all traffic, from a gaudy wedding procession to a roving cow which has crossed over to graze on the other side, is held up till the water goes down again.

The bungalow is a curious little place, "*partly Saracenic and the rest ad libitum*," made up of a little arched veranda overhanging the river, and four little cells of rooms joined on at the four corners. Through the scalloped arches you look out on one side on the river and the town opposite; on the other side, through the vine-like leaves of a small chinar-tree, is a little world of green and shade, an orchard of cherry and peach trees, and their reflections in a tank facing the bungalow. It is a

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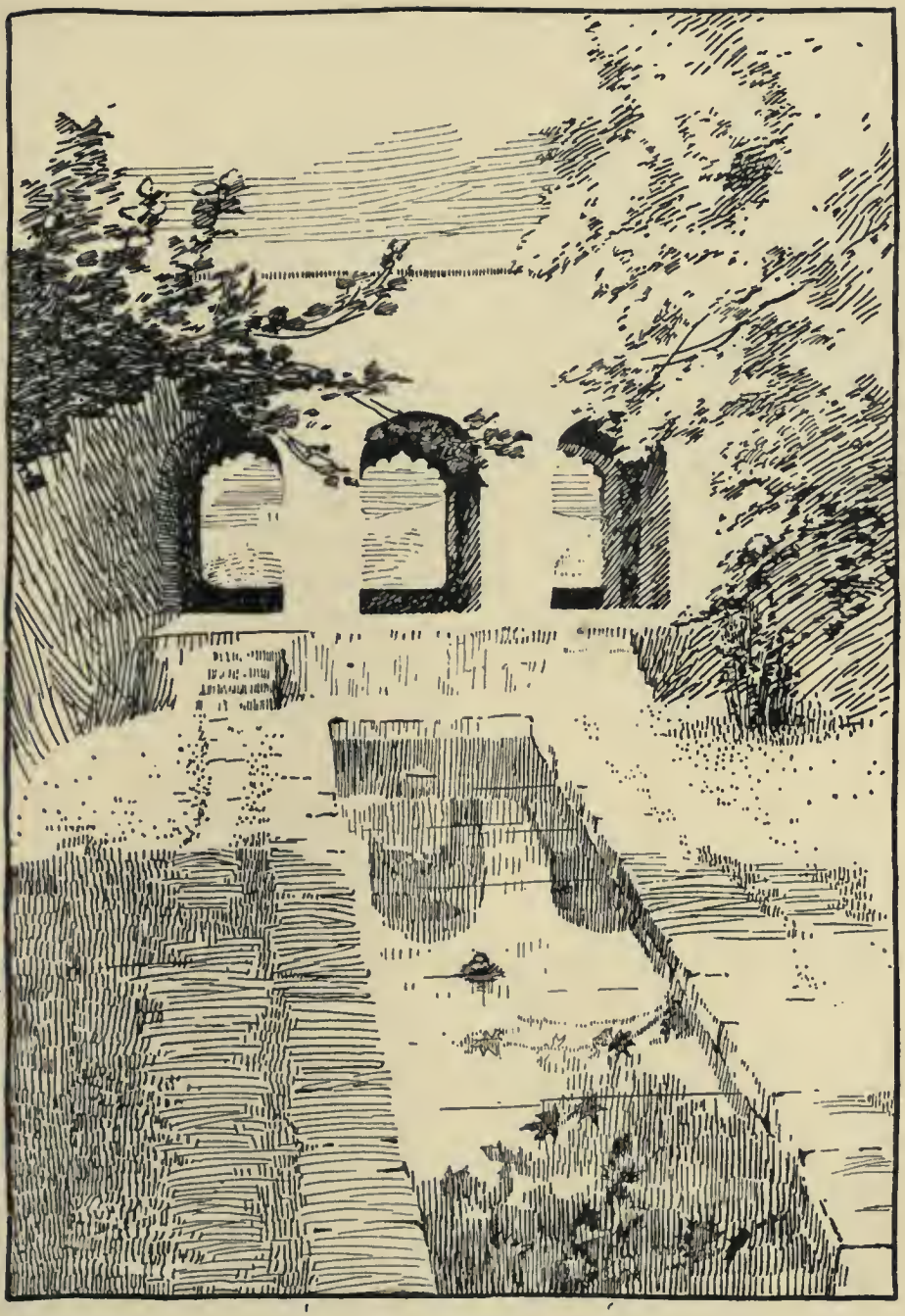

THE BUNGALOW AT RAJAORI

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neglected remnant of an old Moghul garden, of which the best part is outside the bungalow enclosure: a grove of fine, shady trees under which there is room to camp. They are the only trees for miles around, and so all the birds of the neighbourhood are obliged to live here; early in the morning and at sunset there is a pastoral symphony, which entirely eclipses the roar of the river, and it would need an orchestra of several hundred violins to compete with it successfully.

Rajaori is a town of walled forts and turrets and arched gateways at the end of a promontory between two streams, the larger of which is the Tavi. Rajas of Rajaori ruled this kingdom from the seventh century to the beginning of the nineteenth, when the last was deposed by the ruler of Jummu. A strong little Rajput town it is in its pretty valley, looking up to the line of snow, with, at its feet, the rushing mountain stream. In the old days, before modern war was invented, it must have been an impregnable position, only to be taken by treachery. Many and bloody were its feuds in those days. Now all are forgotten, and it is profoundly peaceful. On the hill above it Dhanni Dhar, the empty shell of a strong Sikh fort, symbol of its last struggle, is even more peaceful still. Its garrison is a solitary sepoy, who seems to prefer masquerading as a peaceful ploughman, though

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his ploughshare shows no trace, even on the closest examination, of ever having been anything so alarming as a sword.

From here to Thana Mandi, the next stage, it is still easy marching along level roads following the curve of

DHANNI DHAR

the river, through more fields and villages. Just before the end of the march you have a short climb to the Serai, in front of which blooms purple iris, whose fragrance and rich colour tell you that at last you are nearing Kashmir.

There are two villages, one called Thana and the other Mandi, with about half a mile of hillside between them. Of the old Moghul serais this one here is almost the only one still inhabited. It is the winter residence of

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a colony of blacksmiths, who, in summer, move up to Poshiana just below the Pass, where they shoe the baggage-ponies which cross during the season.

At Thana Mandi there is always a mythical bear in the offing, where, however, it seems to prefer to remain, as one never hears of any one getting it. There is also

A KASHMIRI TRAVELLER

an old shikari who was once with General Kinloch and several other celebrated sportsmen. The passing traveller is now his only distraction, for he is an old man and one hand is disabled—a sahib's bullet that went astray.

The march from Thana to Bahramgalla is at last a real hill march. The air blows keen from the snows you are approaching as you cross the Rattan Pir, a ridge about

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eight thousand feet high, the first of the two high, abrupt steps—for so far the road has been fairly level—by which you cross the mountain barrier. This is an easy three-mile climb, up grassy slopes to the ridge, from which there is a fine snow view of Tuta Kuti, the Crystal Mountain, as

OLD LALLA

the local legends call it, and the slopes to the west of the pass, where the snow still reaches far down into the forest. From the top of the ridge it is a lovely, shaded walk down to Bahramgalla, through fir forests where wild violets grow, and white peonies are beginning to show themselves, and the chestnuts are in bloom.

Bahramgalla is a wild and lonely little gorge. The

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river raves and foams far below, and all round, shutting one in very close, are the grandeur and silence and peace of the hills. It is a place of waterfalls. This little rocky gorge opens into another most lovely one, longer but almost as narrow, its sides covered with forest and threaded by streaks of silver, where the water hurls itself over rocky ledges or through green clefts arched with flowers. But the most beautiful of all is the first, the one nearest Bahramgalla, the Nur-i-Chamb—the Marvel of the World. Black and frowning are the rocky walls that frame it, an iron prison for the white, ethereal, spirit-like thing that flings itself from so far a height into so deep a pool below.

Bahramgalla is also a place of storms; thunder, which the echoes make a long, continuous roar, wild tempests of wind and rain which mean fresh snow on the *pantsal* (mountain) above.

It is, the inhabitants say, a somewhat *sukkut* place. In Kashmir you learn the elastic capacity of this word. It means all that the English words "hard" and "difficult" mean, and much more besides. There are *sukkut* roads and *sukkut* hills, *sukkut* seasons and *sukkut* people. Lumbardars may be *sukkut* and even *sahibs*, when they threaten to shoot people who disobey them. I have also heard of one *sukkut memsahib;* this adjective was

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applied to her because she travelled far into the unknown, beyond Changchenmo, doing the long marches of twenty miles and more on foot, and with ease. They said she was French and a princess, but anything more definite I was unable to discover.

With a vocabulary consisting of *sukkut*, *nimmel*, and *changa*, you may go far in Kashmir. *Nimmel* is what you call the radiant days of deep blue skies and purple shadows on the hills, of fresh breezes and a comprehensive and satisfying delightfulness. *Changa* is nice, the most nice possible, and it is also used to signify assent, as the French say *bien*, or the schoolboy says *righto*.

The lumbardar of Bahramgalla is rather a personage. To begin with, his name is Shah Jehan, and he is also somewhat of "a mountain of mummy," though not unpleasantly so. He has read history, it seems, and he is also very proud of having visited Kashmir *en globe-trotter*, without any other reason for going.

"None could understand it," he tells you. "They all said, 'What work brings you here?' and I said, 'No work. I came to see, like the Angrez sahibs.'"

Bahramgalla in winter is exceedingly *sukkut* according to him.

"Seventeen yards of snow last winter," he says.

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I suppose my feelings show in my face, for he hastens to add, "Not all at once."

It is true the traveller's little rest-house looks as if it were built for difficult weather, for it is most solid, and of a shape and quality to resist the severest storms. It belongs to the Raja of Poonch, who hospitably places it at the disposal of the passing traveller.

On the next march you pass the place where the Emperor Jehangir fired his last shot, the day before he died. It is a very steep place indeed. The cliff on one side goes up several hundred feet sheer from the river, and on the opposite side is a little flat place, where they say he was carried to. The game was driven on the opposite side; he fired at a deer and wounded it; the animal went a little way and fell dead. One of the beaters went after it, missed his footing, and was killed, falling to the bottom of the terrible cliff. It is said the Emperor took this as an omen, foretelling his own death.

This march is up the gorge of waterfalls, like a Highland glen on a somewhat larger scale. It is a short march but a steep climb, especially if you go by the coolie-road. While you are still on the pony-road beside the river you have constantly to cross little bridges made of branches and twigs, kept in place by stones laid on them, and looking like very untidy hawks' nests. One feels a slight

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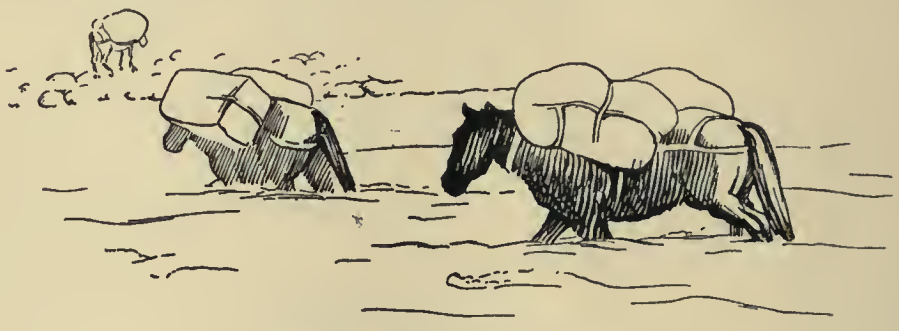
hesitation at some of them; but to see them rocking but safe under the passers-by is reassuring. Later on there are snow-bridges, a welcome change. You camp at Poshiana, after which comes the real ascent to the pass.

The Poshiana "season" does not begin apparently till rather late in the year; perhaps with Ostend, it



WHEN THE BRIDGES ARE DOWN

is at its height in July. At any rate, in April and early May it is deserted, and the empty huts of the summer visitors are a welcome shelter from a wind in which it is impossible to pitch a tent.

"*This is the wind of the Pass*," say the coolies with pride, as you turn a corner and are nearly taken off your feet by a chilling blast. Poshiana is an eerie little place, with an end-of-the-world air about it—a little group of huts built into the hillside on the edge of a precipice. The friendly, sheltering forests are below you. You have climbed past the edge of them and all round you are bare,

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grassy, or stony slopes. It is very cold and the huts have very dark interiors, with an atmosphere vaguely reminiscent of many generations of summer visitors and their flocks and herds. But a fire and tea and, in due course, a lamp are cheering, and, after all, there are not many

POSHIANA

hours to be spent here, for the coolies are very firm about starting early next morning, and it needs all one's powers of persuasion to arrive at a compromise of four o'clock for the start. They seem to think as soon after midnight as possible the proper time, but this appears to us as unnecessary as it would be uncomfortable.

After a few hours of dark and cold in the hut one is

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very glad to get up and start by the light of a moon so large and round and near that it seems to be standing at your door, half of which was accidentally burned in the kitchen fire last night.

It is a long climb up to the top of the "Pir." Also one does not feel tremendously energetic at four in the morning. And it is rather aggravating when you have toiled up a steep ascent, which, to your sleepy brain, seems to have lasted untold hours, to find you have to go down to the level of a stream further than you have come up and then begin your climb all over again—the real ascent this time. At this place and hour one cannot help feeling that a little modern engineering would be worth a good deal of historic past.

The Pir Panjal, though not yet "open" and still under snow, does not present any insurmountable difficulties even to the amateur in climbing, and the Alpine clubbist would probably disdain it altogether. The only real difficulty is fatigue, for the ascent is steep and long, and some people might be affected by the height—which is about eleven thousand five hundred feet—and find a little difficulty in breathing. In one place there is a climb of, perhaps, five hundred feet or a little more, up a rather perpendicular snow-drift, where your coolies look like little black ants crawling up a whitewashed wall, but with

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grass shoes this has no terrors, though you have to go very slowly. Near the top you cross several snow-slopes, where there are stones slipping down from above with an exceedingly high velocity, and here you have to follow the coolies' example, to watch your chance and run across, so as to avoid being hurled into the snowy abyss below; a proceeding which leaves you somewhat collapsed and breathless, for it comes at the end of an excessively steep climb of three thousand feet.

It is hard to believe there is anything very dangerous about it, till some one points to the drift below and says, "Down there a man and three ponies were buried by an avalanche a few weeks ago." And this is why you have to get up so early in the morning, that you may get to the top before the sun has had time to melt the snow on these steep slopes enough to make them ready to slip down. But if you are fortunate in your weather, and height does not affect your breathing, the radiance of sun and sky and snow and the quality of the air up here make tragedy seem impossible, one of those "old, unhappy, far-off things" which do not belong to your world at all, this world of wonderful air and a white winding plain, which is the Pass, bordered by hills of snow; and the top of even a minor pass seems the only place worth living in.

But there is not much time for loitering, for the snow

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gets more difficult to walk on later, and the coolies, with their usual morbid fear of storms, even on the most brilliant of days, have hurried on to get out of the pass as quickly as possible, and your tents are far ahead.

THE PIR PANJAL—A MINOR PASS

After three miles of an almost level, snowy plain come grassy slopes still wet and spongy from the newly melted snow, and gay with tiny flowers no higher than the turf, patches of pure and brilliant colour, the richest purple-blue to match the sky, bright rose-pink and pale mauve,

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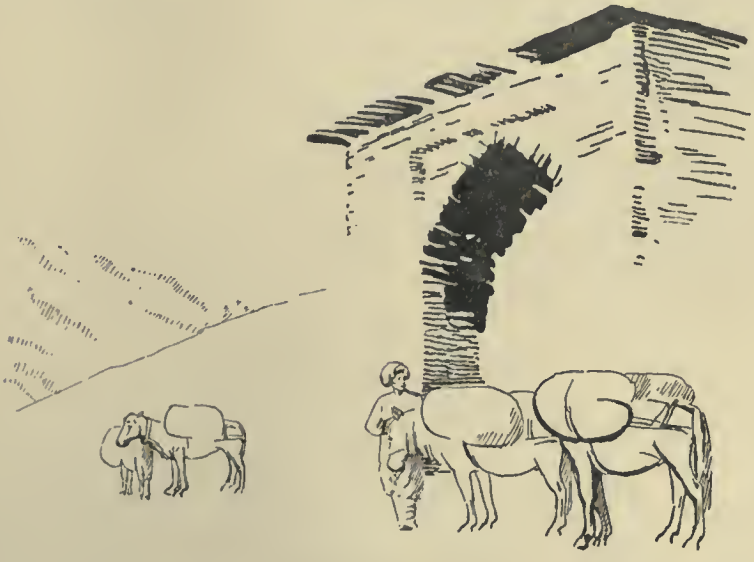
the most dainty of carpets, with a delicate, aromatic fragrance which seems to belong to grass and flowers alike at this height.

At the end of this gently sloping plain is Aliabad Serai, a deserted ruin, emphasising the loneliness of the



WAITING FOR ORDERS

place where it stands. It is impossible to camp here at this time of year, as it is too unsheltered from winds and storms, and there is no firewood near. After the Serai, the road descends in long zigzags along bare slopes with tremendous cliffs going down to the river.

Once upon a time there lived here a Giant called Lal Golam. He was a cannibal—like all giants in those days—and he lived in a cave just above the road. You had

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to be very careful in going past his cave; indeed, the wonder is that any one ever got past at all, for his favourite amusement was to throw the largest rocks he could find at the passing traveller, and when he had wounded or killed him, he took him up to his larder in the cave. Perhaps the giant was not a marksman, or, and I think this is more likely, there may have been in those days a good fairy at the very top of the Pir, who would show you how to get past him if you asked her nicely, and if you were the sort of person the fairies take to. What happened to the Giant afterwards no one knows, or, if any one does know, he must have promised not to tell. Anyway, the cave is empty, and you can see it; but the new road, very wisely, goes above it, in case of accidents, for with giants you can never be too careful.

After many miles of winding down along a narrow, slippery path, which looks like a thread laid along the middle of vast bare hillsides, the proper camp will be at a place called Doobjee. But, if you prefer your own way, you will choose instead a most lovely spot called Sukh Serai—built, they say, by a Moghul lady—on the left bank of the river, and somewhat off the road, to which you return afterwards by a rather *sukkut* short cut along a cliff overhanging the river, where even the sure-footed

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ALIABAD SERAI, ON
THE PIR PANJAL PASS

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coolies crawl on hands and knees. Sukh Serai is a little green glade of the forest, shut in by dark fir trees, with a background of snow. The river, whose tiny beginning you saw far up on the Pass, is here too deep and strong to be forded, a resistless rush of green and silver breaking in snowy foam over the rocks in its way.

From here you may, if you like, march down towards the valley next day. It is, at this time of year, and on such a day, a march of dream-like beauty. There are clouds, not dark nor heavy, but only just enough to show you in rapidly changing moments how lovely a grey day can be; there is sunlight of every varying degree of brilliance down to the soft, silvery tones beloved of Corot. A day which would be the despair of a painter, for no two moments are alike, and all are exquisite.

And before you is the valley—a haze of delicate, misty blues and greens, ending in the abrupt walls of the Lidar and Wardwan valleys, still white with the winter snow. But there is no need to look forward to any Land of Promise on the horizon, for all round you is a country whose charm is much more powerful than the too ordered and serene beauty of the valley. Here, on the mountain slopes, is an enchanted land of forests of fir and silver birch and maple, of green stretches of moorland dappled with all the flowers of an English spring, including

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the golden gorse of Scotland—the "whins" whose faint, sweet scent makes a shy apology for their excessive prickliness—besides apple and pear and cherry trees all in bloom. And after the flowers are gone, there will still remain the true Kashmir, the land of mountain streams, of forests and snow, of solitudes too exquisite to be lonely, of Nature untroubled by human meddling.

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THE SHEPHERDESS

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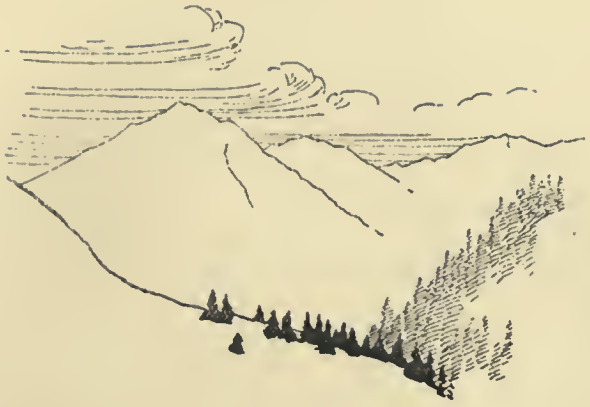

THE SHEPHERDESS

SHE was no dainty, high-heeled *blonde* of the era Louis Quinze, no model for Fragonard or Watteau. The splendid energy of Franz Hals or of the great Spanish masters would have delighted in the freedom of her pose and her wild grace and vigour.

Her environment, too, was far removed from the trim elaboration, the ordered and trained luxuriance of those parks with stately *allées* and sculptured fountains, where the artificial yet charming ladies of Watteau disport themselves; playing at life in a golden land where "*it is always afternoon.*"

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The shepherdess and "her house," she said, came from Swat and Bonair. My acquaintance with those parts is limited to hazy recollections of snapshots I have seen in the dim past, in the collections of various amateur photographers returned from the Tirah campaign; hence I could form no definite mental picture of the surroundings to which she belonged, beyond a general impression of vastness and desolation.

But it would be hard to imagine a more fitting background for her than the place where we met. Round us was the dark fir forest through which gleamed the flashing silver of a mountain torrent, thundering down the narrow gorge, on its way to join the Brinwar stream, one of the "thousand sources" of the Jhelum. Above the line of climbing forest rose the lofty snowy summits which guard the Wardwan Valley and Kishtwar; those happy hunting-grounds where red bear and ibex wander.

She stood, a tall and slender figure, beside a great, grey rock, in a grassy, flower-decked glade of the forest. The sun gleamed on the massive squares of silver strung on bright blue beads, which formed her necklace, and the long and clinging lines of her garments emphasised the grace and suppleness of her bearing, while their sombre hues harmonised well with the gloom of the crowding firs behind her.

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A SHEPHERDESS

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She wore a sort of shirt of dull, dark red, which hung loose from her shoulders half-way to her knees, and was embroidered (the work of her own hands, she told

OUR CAMPING-GROUND BELOW THE PASS

me) at the throat and down the front. Below this were very full Turkish trousers of the darkest blue, threaded with curving lines of red, and falling in swirling folds to

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her ankles, where they fitted tight, showing a slender ankle and a bare and shapely foot. Round her forehead was a straight band of dark blue, attached to a close-fitting cap of the same colour, from the back of which fell a sort of cape as far as her shoulders, the whole head-dress resembling very much in shape and effect the chain-mail caps worn by the Crusaders, and giving her somewhat the air of a warrior-maid, the dark-browed Valkyrie of an Eastern Saga.

Her eyes were beautiful, wild and soft as a deer's, shaded by long, dark, curving lashes. The effect was simply irresistible, when, in a sudden fit of shyness, she gazed down at what would have been the point of her shoe had she belonged to the West, and the dark fringe of her lashes lay soft on the lovely curve of her cheek, while a smile lurking on the charming mouth brought out the dimples in her cheeks and chin.

It is hardly correct, perhaps, to call her a shepherdess, for there were very few sheep in her flock, which consisted mostly of goats, the long-haired goats of Kashmir, more like wild forest creatures than domestic animals. There were hundreds of goats which streamed by, an endless sea of tossing heads and soft, rippling, silky hair. Very tame they were, too, and very interested in us. One would suddenly become aware of our presence, and stop

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to look at us with the air of having been confronted with an unusual phenomenon; the others, coming up behind, and seeing him standing, would stop to see what he was looking at in a ridiculously human fashion, and a circle would soon form round us, very much in the same way

KASHMIR GOATS

and with the same quickness as a street crowd. Then the nearer ones, growing bolder as we sat still, would come up quite close, sniffing at us and licking our hands and dresses, while they gazed at us with eyes that could almost speak.

There were several other women with the herd, all

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dressed very much in the same way, and most of them tall, graceful, and very handsome, while beautiful eyes had been dealt out to them all in the most lavish manner. Each woman usually carried on her head a huge jar, or

BRINGING IN FODDER

an assortment of the family cooking-pots, while almost every one had slung from her shoulders, in a square of red or blue cloth, a small bundle, soft and warm, her baby, usually sound asleep. Besides their necklaces, though none had so massive or so long a one as our shepherdess, a universal ornament was a most effective

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A GUJAR WOMAN CARRYING HER BABY
AND HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS

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arrangement of small, white, china buttons, sewn on at regular intervals round the arm-holes and shoulder-seams of their shirts, and often along the sleeves and round their edges.

I had never before realised the decorative possibilities of the common white button. It was the sort which is only met with on the garments of one's childhood, when it is usually situated down the small of one's back; and among one's early recollections it figures in many a frantic but futile struggle to button one's clothes oneself, for somehow, at the critical moment, nurse usually contrives to be occupied with some other small person, and descends on one only in time to undo the heroic but misguided effort of many agonised minutes. How much more sensible to use the tantalising button solely for adornment, and then in places where one can admire the effect oneself!

Our shepherdess had a small daughter, who now appeared on the scene — a lovely little creature, fair-skinned and rosy, with starry eyes, like her mother's; but in their brown depths lurked the wildest spirit of mischief as she tried to entice her mother away to play with her, and fluttered round like a naughty butterfly, interfering greatly with our attempts at sketching her.

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Presently the head of "her house," who was also her husband, sauntered up, and offered to conduct me round their camp, for they were going to halt here for the night. Seated on a rock near by, he had been engaged in reading the Koran to an attentive circle of listeners, the other men of the tribe, to whom our shikari had devoutly joined himself.

He shared in the universal good looks, the head of "her house"—for he was very handsome, and young to occupy such a position. His height, his dark, flashing eyes and coal-black hair, and the clearness and fairness of his skin made him a striking figure, and the sort of mantle of striped cloth, in which scarlet predominated, which he draped over his shoulders, added to his picturesqueness.

When I asked him where their home was, he pointed to the steep crags and gloomy forest.

"What home have we?" he said. "This is our home to-night. Every day in a new place; we wander always; everywhere is our home, we have no other."

Then he showed me what he called their "tents." Beside the stream, wherever there was a little flat place sheltered from the wind and rain, each family had its camp. Except the trees and rocks, other protection

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there was none. The ground where they slept was covered with freshly gathered pine-needles or spruce branches, and rolled-up felt rugs or blankets were the only signs of personal baggage where warmer clothing might possibly lurk. Lying about near each encampment were several

DOMESTIC DUTIES

large, hairy dogs, which he said were very fierce, and protected their enormous straggling flocks from possible thieves and also from the red bear, which they sometimes encounter on the heights where they graze. But, as a rule, the red bear seem to be silent, unsociable creatures, who dislike the noise and stir brought by the goats and

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their guardians, whose advent drives them to seek regions more wild and desolate still.

This especial herd, numbering more than two thousand goats, had come from beyond Maru Wardwan, from the lofty grazing-grounds of Zanskar, and were on their way through Kashmir to their winter quarters. They were

ON THEIR WAY UP

obliged to go round by one of the passes on the Kishtwar road, for was not the Hoksir Pass, their shortest route, closed to them this year, by order of the State and Major Wigram Sahib? I tried to console him by saying that the Sinthan—the pass on the Kishtwar road—was a much easier one, only a little over eleven thousand feet high.

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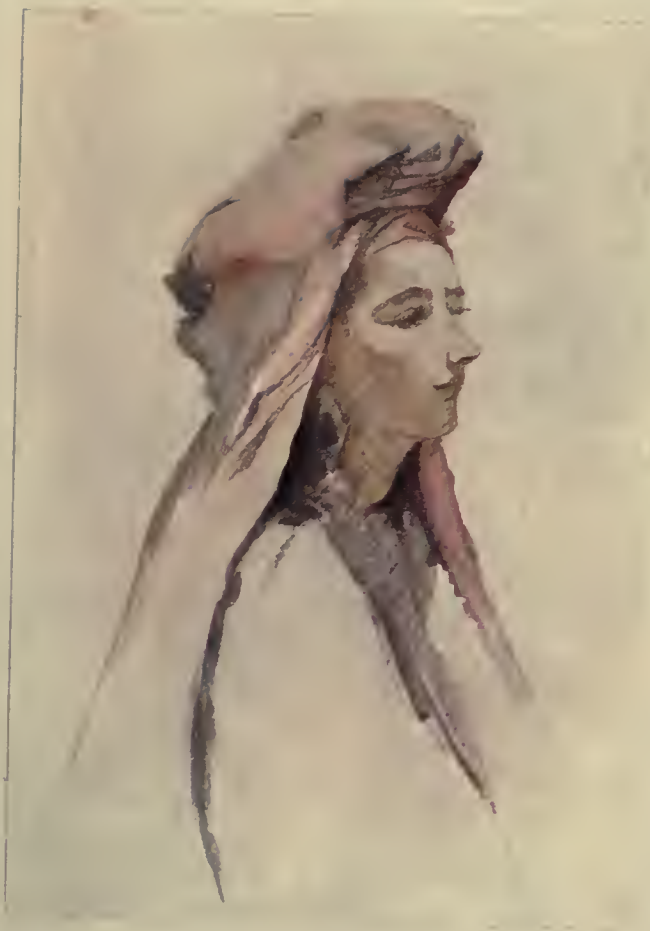

ONE OF THE TRIBE

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"But," he said, "our goats like the high places. They cannot eat the grass that grows in the low nullahs." To-morrow they would all go on to another nullah, loftier, steeper, and more rocky than this one; a haunt of red bear, our shikari said, where their goats would be more at home.

Before we left he asked me for some medicine for an old man, who, from his appearance and the description of his symptoms, evidently was far gone in consumption. I told him how sorry I was that the doctors had not yet found a medicine for his disease. He seemed to find it hard to believe that I could do nothing, and was so distressed that I bestowed on him a bottle of cough-mixture which we somehow numbered among our possessions. He was very pleased, and their faith in the powers of the Angrez was pathetic.

We passed their camp again late that evening. In the dark shadow of a tall tree-trunk, by the fitful gleam of the firelight, we saw our shepherdess crouching near the leaping flame; beside her slept her little daughter wrapped in a ragged blanket. The sun had long set and night had fallen on the forest, though on the towering, snow-crowned peaks that shut in the nullah a faintly roseate afterglow still lingered, turning soon to ashen grey. Faintly through "*the noise of many waters*" came the plaintive wail of

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a baby, like the cry of a lost spirit, and down the gorge blew the icy night wind, colder than the snow-fed waters of the tossing stream among the rocks below.

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THE RETURN

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THE RETURN

THERE had been heavy rain the day before in the valley, and snow on the summits of the lofty peaks that enclosed it. The deep blue of the sky was enhanced by radiant masses of white cloud still hovering near the mountain-tops.

The valley lay at an elevation of about eight thousand feet. South and west were the gently sloping hills that divided it from Kashmir, while to the north and east towered the rocky barriers of the Wardwan. Many small hamlets nestled, each in its own fine group of spreading walnut trees, and wild apple and pear, cherry and apricot

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grew everywhere; straggling and uncared for, but covered in the season with fruit, which is rarely allowed to ripen so eager for it are the villagers, and so childishly improvident, for they eat it long before it is fit for use.

Wild flowers grew thick on the grassy slopes where the cattle were feeding, and hedged the maize and rice

A RUINED TREE

fields with wavering lines of colour; pink, and all shades of purple, from the palest mauve to the deepest violet, feathery tufts of white, tall and slender and swaying in the breeze, and a profusion of starry yellow heads.

It was a place where one might live and die content, having seen Nature in all her fairest moods; the stern grandeur of the winter snows; the smiling, changeful loveliness of spring; and the exceeding beauty of the

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THE END OF THE DAY

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clear, late autumn; while, dividing the seasons, came the massed clouds and mist and pealing thunder of the rains.

Karima toiled slowly along the road at the bottom of the valley. He was going back to his own village. He had walked all day for many weary days, and he was burning with fever.

In the spring—how long ago it seemed!—the Maharaja Sahib had sent to all the villages in the valley for men for the *begar*. They were to go to Tibet—Karima called it *Cheen*—to help the *Angrez* in the war. From his village he alone had gone. They had met at Islamabad, the starting-point for their long journey, two hundred and fifty men from the *tahsil*. There had been the march down to the plains and then a tale of fresh wonders every day, beginning with the railway and ending with the building of the bridge across the great river in far Tibet, where the guns of the *Angrez* had to cross. Then the fever had taken him, so that the sahibs had sent him back. There had been many days in the train, and now, through the hills, he was walking home.

If he had been well it would not have seemed long; forty miles a day, unladen, would have been nothing to him, starting in the star-lit dawn and walking till night overtook him. But with this fever, this endless aching in

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his bones, each step had grown more toilsome than the last, and he lost count of the days he had been upon the way. But now, at last, the end, so long looked forward to, so yearned for, by every fibre of his weary frame, by every throb of his home-sick heart, was near. How often in those interminable marches, over the high desolate plains of Tibet, those unending stretches of barrenness and solitude, a fierce sun by day and a biting cold at night, he

COOLIE TRANSPORT

had thought of this valley—its rich verdure, its bloom and beauty.

As the fever grew on him the idea of it had possessed him more and more; and he had walked silent, uncomplaining, seemingly stupid and brutish to the superior intelligences who used him, while his brain steeped itself in memories of his home, and his unseeing eyes, heedless of what surrounded him, had been turned always to this beloved valley. So he had walked, his eyes glued to the ground, in a long line of laden coolies, following mechanically the footsteps of the man before him. Now all that

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was over, and he was going home. How cool the waters of the little mountain streams he crossed were to his burning feet! He did not go by the little log-bridges on the road—the sahibs might use them if they liked. He had taken off putties and chuplies and slung them, with his thick puttoo coat, over his shoulder. Beside the last stream he crossed he sat down where it dashed itself over a great rock in its way. The muffled roar of the water soothed him, and he watched the hurrying, sparkling drops of spray hurl themselves into the deep pool below, a bewildering multitude. They had come a long way too, all those shining drops; this *nala*—how well he knew its course through the shadow of the fir trees—came from that snowy peak closing the eastern end of the valley. He had been there only last season with the sahib, who shot the ibex and the bear. How the water hurried! His tired eyes watched it till they closed and he slept beside the stream, in the flickering shadow of the willows. When he woke it was afternoon, and, on the vivid green of the sloping meadows, there were long, blue shadows from pine and walnut and apple trees.

He rose to his feet, aching in every limb, and wandered on. The road here, as it climbed through the grassy pasture-land, was bare and treeless, hot in the afternoon sun. He dragged himself along, feeling strangely inclined

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to burst into hysterical weeping from sheer weakness, while his legs seemed to move automatically, as if they did not belong to him. The road might have been one of the dreary roads of Tibet for all he cared or heeded, so absorbed was he in the mere effort of getting on; till a grateful sense of cool and shade roused him to notice where he was. The path was climbing through the silvery grey of little willow trees and a tangled hedge of wild flowers beside a tiny stream. He was very near home now, and his dulled eyes noted each well-remembered turn of the road. Those maize-fields to the left were Wahaba's, and a fine crop they looked; there would be no famine this year—even in Srinagar the time for floods was over. They had already begun to collect the winter fodder; he could see, above the tall heads of the maize, great bundles of grass in the forked branches of the pollarded willows drying in the sun.

He was nearly spent now, the pain in his back was growing intolerable. He felt he must be increasingly careful of how he raised each foot and put it down. Here, at last, was Wahaba's house, the first house in the village, with its hedge of woven willow branches, looking something like coarse basket-work. Then the road passed through the camping-ground where the sahibs stayed who were going to shoot in Maru or Kishtwar. Next came

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a bridge, and, to the right, two great walnut trees, the finest in all the valley except those at Nowboog; in their shadow stood the little *ziarat* (shrine) with its walls of red-brown logs. He had not far to go now. Here were the fields of *sâg* with their wooden palings, which marked the centre of the village, and opposite, across the stream, was the lumbardar's house. To-morrow he would go

A CAMPING-GROUND

there; for to-morrow he would be well. If only he could reach his father's house! He would lie down on soft, warm blankets in that long upper room, with its little windows level with the floor, so that as you lay you could watch the road and see who went by. Perhaps she would pass, Dzunia, the lumbardar's youngest daughter. He looked again with longing towards the house across the stream. Was it not for her that he had gone on the

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long *begar* to distant *Cheen*, so that he might have enough "double" rupees to satisfy her father and win Dzunia? To-day he would be content if he could see her pass; to-morrow—ah! to-morrow he would be well!

WINTER FODDER

In his father's house they would give him tea, the good Kashmiri tea, hot and thick, in a little pale green bowl, and he would lie in great content and watch all the pleasant, well-known life around him; his mother sitting in the ray of late sunlight that would lie across the floor from the westernmost window, spinning the grey wool

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"THE LUMBARDAR"
(The headman of a village is called the Lumbardar)

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into puttoo for winter wear, while his eldest brother's wife ground the *kunak* (wheat) into flour, and his little sisters went and came with laugh and chatter, fetching water or washing the *sâg* for the evening meal, or playing with his brother's baby.

Only a few steps further. On the right of the road was the bunnia's shop, looking like a toy house of wood, very clean and new, with its carved lattices and deeply sloping roof. There were several men sitting in the narrow veranda behind the low, carved railing. He knew them all; they greeted him and asked him many questions. He answered vaguely and at random, hardly hearing their words, so possessed was he with the desire of reaching his father's house. They shook their heads as he passed on. "It is fever," they said to each other; "he will not live."

The end at last! On the left of the road two apple trees made a natural gateway, and a little path led through his father's maize-fields to his home, a typical village dwelling of Kashmir. The family were still in their summer quarters, the long upper room with its walls of rough logs with many spaces for light and air. He heard the drone of the spinning-wheel, and some one was singing. Then, from a window, he was seen, and they all poured out, running down to welcome him. Somehow

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he climbed the steep outside stair, he could never remember how, then he fainted.

When he awoke to full consciousness again he was lying by the window of his dreams. Some one was talking outside, just below the window. There were several voices; one was foreign, talking broken Hindustani with

A VILLAGE HOME

a curious accent and using many strange words. That must be a sahib, for it was thus the sahibs talked. Then a voice translated into Kashmiri. "He will live," it said.

Who would live? he wondered. Who was it they thought might die? There was the sound of a woman sobbing. Again came the stumbling words, the foreign accent, and, after it, the *shikari* translating:

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"The sahib says to tell you he will live. Do not weep. Give him of this *dewai* (medicine) when he wakes. Afterwards give him this, so much every day. If the fever returns give him the white *dewai*, here, in these papers."

THE INTERPRETER

What could it all be about? He tried to rise, to go downstairs to find out. But, to his surprise, he fell back on his blankets. He must have been even more tired than he had thought.

Presently some of them came back upstairs. He opened his eyes. How strangely weak his own voice

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sounded as he asked, "What is this? To whom does the sahib give *dewai?*"

"It is to thee, my son," said his old father, coming to sit by him. "It is as the sahib said," he continued, seeing with joy that his son was awake and restored to consciousness. "Thou wilt soon be well. By the will of God this sahib came to Deuss, and such rain fell for three days that he could not go on to Kishtwar to shoot immediately. The sahib, showing great kindness, cared for thee all these days and gave thee his medicine. Now the rain is over and he goes to-morrow. But thou art well, my son."

Karima had one more question. "How many days is it since I came?"

"What matters one day or two days? But I will not lie; it is to-day the fourth day."

Then Karima drank the medicine his mother brought him, and lay back content. He would get well, the sahib had said so.

With the curious childlikeness in many things of the hill-men of Kashmir, he had implicit faith in the powers of the sahibs. His own belief in his recovery no doubt helped greatly the medicine given him by the Doctor Sahib, who had been weather-bound below the pass, and had found absorbing occupation for the long, dreary hours

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in nursing his patient through a bad spell of fever. Karima's fine constitution, too, had played its part, and in a fortnight, though still very weak, he could venture down the steps, and very slowly, with many halts, along the road.

It was evening, all his people were out in the fields,

FOOTSORE

or gossiping in the village; his brother had taken a *dali* (basket) of fruit and vegetables to a sahib who was camping here for the night, and would doubtless give him much *bakshish*.

Lying by his window he had seen Dzunia pass. She was hurrying along as she always did; a slim slip of a girl, in a ragged garment of coarse puttoo, a

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folded white cloth on her head above a little cap, a head-dress with something of the air of that once worn by the Roman peasantry. She had glanced up at his house for a moment and he had seen again, for the first time since he came back, the face for which he had gone to distant *Cheen*.

It was a somewhat wistful face, with great, shy, light-brown eyes. Her hair, too, was light brown, braided in many small braids, all caught together at the ends, reaching below her waist, and finished off with a large tassel of black wool, according to the decree of fashion in these parts. All round her forehead, soft, light-brown curls, blown by the wind, escaped from under her little cap. Her skin was very fair, and showed a delicate colour in her cheeks. There was a rebellious air about the pretty mouth. Dzunia was going to keep watch in her father's fields, to sit in a quaint little erection of straw and dried branches, like a huge nest, to scare away the birds and keep a look out for other pilferers. Her brother would not come to relieve her till late in the evening, and she had at least three hours of lonely vigil. She would break it by running home presently for a bowl of tea, but it was dull work.

Besides, only last evening, and not later than eight o'clock, a black bear had come and eaten much before he

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THE MAR THAR NULLAH

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was driven away. It was easy for men, who were not afraid, like girls, to drive away black bears; but for her, she did not like it at all, and—who could tell?—the bear might come earlier to-day.

Karima had heard of the black bear; he knew, too,

DZUNIA'S WINDOW

that Dzunia always had the afternoon watch, with the few minutes' break when she hurried home for tea. If he walked up the road towards the Sinthan Nar he might meet her coming back. Then he could tell her that soon she would not need to watch any more in the maize-fields. So he went up the road.

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It was a golden evening, after a perfect September day ; the sky a dome of turquoise, unflecked by any cloud. There was a faintly aromatic scent in the air from the hedgerows where grew many a flowering weed of autumn, and from the feathery grasses nodding in the wind. Here and there tall sprays of larkspur lifted their delicate heads, so deeply exquisitely blue. In the meadows below the road the creamy flowers of the scabious, with their faint, sweet scent, stood like pale stars amid the deeper yellow of the wild asters. The plumed heads of the maize were a lovely shade of pink, the colour which the afterglow of sunset would soon paint on the grey crags above the lofty eastern boundary of the nullah.

In the road lay a little pile of stripped cobs ; this was done by the bear last night. Near by the path branched off into the lumbardar's fields. By this Dzunia would come presently. He sat down on a stone by the roadside to wait. A cold wind blew down the gorge from the high peaks shutting it in, lightly powdered with newly fallen snow. He drew his warm blanket closer round him. There, to his right, was the Mar Thar Nala. How often he had longed to see that range of towering summits, sharply pointed and rugged, fairy-like pinnacles of snow from early in the winter to late in June. Now the evening was laying deep shadows of sapphire and amethyst along

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their lower slopes, while their crests were golden in the setting sun.

Ah! it was good to be in his own country, among his own hills. And there, on the path, coming towards him, was Dzunia.

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IN CHAMBA

THE town of Chamba is the capital of the hill-state of Chamba situated to the north-east of the Panjab, between it, Kashmir, and Ladakh. The scenery is wild and beautiful, there is good shooting to be had, and the kindness and courtesy of the Raja of Chamba to those who travel in his country are well known in the north. There are several peaks rising above 18,000 feet in this State, and it is bordered to the north and east by the huge peaks of the districts of Pangyi

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and Lahoul, which are over 20,000 feet and make a background for the nearer snows.

The history of this State is very interesting, and is well authenticated from the time of the great Sahilla-Varman who ruled Chamba early in the tenth century; one of its greatest chiefs, whose name is still a household word. The present town of Chamba was founded by him, to please his daughter, who accompanied him on some of his warlike expeditions, and he made it the capital of the State. After a career of conquest which extended from the hill-states of the Sutlej to the fierce Tartar invaders of the north beyond Kabul, after building his new capital and many great temples, he abdicated in favour of his son, and ended his life as an ascetic among the hills beloved of his childhood, the sterner beauty of his early capital, Brahmaur. For about fourteen centuries the same race has ruled in Chamba, a branch of the Rajput family still reigning at Oodeypur in Meywar, the oldest of the Rajput dynasties of India. During all these centuries there has never been wanting an heir of the royal race to succeed to the throne and to rule, on the whole, for the good of his people. Anarchy has therefore been unknown and invasion practically so.

The town of Chamba itself is in a valley not higher than 3000 feet, bordered on one side by snow-capped

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mountains nearly as high as Mont Blanc. The centre of the town is a large, flat, open space—the polo ground. Round this runs a road bordered by a very neat and nicely built bazaar; climbing up the hillside behind the

THE RANI'S PALACE

bazaar rise temples, the houses of the better classes, and the palaces of the royal family. The town has a very well-kept and prosperous air, and is remarkably clean and orderly, and Chamba has the reputation of being a model State.

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Having marched down from Kashmir through Kishtwar and Badarwah, we spent a few days in October in the Forest Bungalow in Chamba kindly lent to us during our stay, a delightful house with a large garden. After the long and difficult marches we had done it was very pleasant to rest here, and during the day we found it a

IN MARCHING KIT

fascinating and sufficient occupation to watch from the upstairs veranda the procession of life on the road which ran past the gate.

This road came from Kashmir, also from Badarwah and Kishtwar and Padar—a land of *shikar* and sapphire mines. Pangyi might also be reached from it, and, if you went far enough, even Leh. In this respect it was rather

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like the road to Rome. From almost anywhere on the borders of Kashmir most roads lead to Leh if you only go far enough, and it is only by being very firm about it that you can avoid going there too.

For the last few miles the road has followed the course of the Ravi, here a mountain-stream, wide and deep; it has passed, about five miles away, a plain where no field or garden is ever allowed to be since the tragedy enacted there in days gone by, when a ruling chief of Chamba and his brother were treacherously murdered here. Later, it has come by the Garden of Sirol, a neglected pleasaunce round which linger the ghosts of long-dead romances, like the faint fragrance of the late roses bordering the grass-grown walks. Afterwards it has again followed the stream, and crossing a tributary by a suspension bridge, has climbed the steep side of the plateau on which stands Chamba, "*the happy*," as its name means.

Along this road pass the hill-people of all stages of wildness, their dress varying with each difference of tribe or village. Among them are the tall Gaddis in full-skirted coats of white homespun hanging in voluminous folds from the waist almost to the knee, and belted with ropes made of goats' hair. A high felt cap completes this costume; and if the wearer is one of the *jeunesse dorée*

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of his village he will have a long and carefully arranged curl hanging over his right shoulder, and a necklace of large turquoise and silver amulets.

Among the feminine passers-by the dress of the women of Chamba is the most attractive. They wear an outer garment with a short, high-waisted bodice; on to this are gathered innumerable folds of muslin, so full as to have the effect of accordion pleating, and reaching nearly to the ankles; the colour is usually pale pink, blue, or yellow, and sometimes even a dull red. Beneath this they wear a shirt and long Turkish trousers which fit very tight from the knee to the ankle. These are usually of some contrasting colour, or white, and as the overdress is not fastened in front the effect is very pretty as it swirls open with each movement of the wearer, showing glimpses of colour underneath. The ladies of Chamba are very clever with the needle, and do a sort of embroidery in silk which is exactly the same on both sides; these are usually processions of figures, very heraldic in drawing, and reminding one rather of the old tapestries of the Norman ladies of long ago.

The women of Chamba are very graceful, with gentle manners, and sweet voices having the curious pathetic *timbre* which seems to belong to the hills, and have in it the feeling of their great waste spaces and

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sombre forests, the chill of night, and the loneliness of evening.

Among the passers-by have been the horses of the Raja's stud, among them some nice animals taking their daily exercise along this road; and, returning from pasture, the cows of the State dairy, a model institution. A red Lama from Tibet comes every morning to sell us

PART OF THE PROCESSION

eggs, an uncouth creature who seems to think a camera an infernal machine and flies before it. A great incident of the day is the passing of the State elephant, when it is taken down to the river for a bath and an airing; it is a strange apparition in these parts, and an unfailing source of interest and wonder to our Kashmiris.

At sunset, as the colour fades from the wall of snow

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which looks down on the little town, the worshippers gather in the courts of the temple of Vishnu. It is the hour for evening prayer, the farewell to the sun, since Vishnuism is only another name for sun-worship, the

A GRACEFUL DRESS

cult of the god of the "million, molten, spears of morn," which the Aryans brought with them from their lofty home in Central Asia, and grafted on the gloomy earth-worship, still surviving as Shivaism, which they found among the aborigines.

Here, in this hill state of the North, both faiths

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still endure side by side; while even nearer to the hearts of the primitive hill-men is a still earlier belief, the worship of the *Devas*, the demons who inhabit mountain and stream, and whose temples—small, square, wooden structures, with conical roofs and rudely carved doors—are met with everywhere along the line of march, by the cool waters of many a spring, or, high on a lofty peak, looking towards the pinnacles of eternal snow where the gods have their summer home.

No beneficent, joy-giving deities are these Devas, as one might perhaps imagine from the splendid sites of some of their temples, but dread divinities whom the trembling villagers propitiated till within the last fifty years by human sacrifices, and to whom they still go to fulfil the wishes nearest their hearts, the desire for a son or for an abundant harvest. All-powerful they are, terrible and relentless, incarnations perhaps of the storm-winds, the bitter cold, the death-shroud of the snow, the hidden crevasse in the glacier, or the engulfing avalanche, the great forces of Nature which, in these lonely heights, baffle continually the strength and will of man.

It was natural that the fair-skinned, high-hearted Aryans, men of a nobler race, should bring with them a brighter and more hopeful faith; for were they not akin to those others who, going westward and settling

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in the fairest country of Europe, gave the world its ideal forms of beauty—the Apollos and Athenæs, the Aphrodites and Hermes, and the thousand lovely shapes whose names are lost, but which still give substance to our dreams of beauty?

But the tribe who wandered east and south little knew the fatal power of the land they went to. Wonderful and magnificent it must have seemed to them; a land whose beauty goes hand in hand with terror, a grandeur of lofty mountains, of mighty rivers, of seemingly boundless plains of a fertility undreamed of; but a land where they must have learned the futility of man; where the fierce heats and torrential rains, the sudden pestilences, the climate that saps his strength and leaves him powerless in the grip of the forces whose caprice he learns to call Destiny, made them in the end adopt the dark creed of the Destroyer.

But in Chamba, where Nature is kinder, where a temperate climate makes life easier, the worship of the Preserver, Vishnu, is the most followed still.

Through an arched gateway we pass into a paved enclosure, where six temples stand in a row beneath the palace wall. The northernmost is the temple of Vishnu. More than a thousand years ago, in his new capital, the great and unforgotten Sahil-Varman built this temple,

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and ever since, at sunset, the same worship has gone on in this ancient shrine of the Sun.

The brief, grey twilight lingers round the tall grey temples standing side by side; the rich carving which covers them is blotted out in the gloom, while their form

THE OLD TEMPLES OF CHAMBA

alone shows a distinct mass against the pale evening sky. They are very impressive, these silent temples, on which the giant circle of mountains looks down, their height and nearness dwarfing the little town at their feet.

As the twilight deepens the air vibrates with mysterious sound, the first drowsy murmur of the temple music. The

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priest is already before the altar in the lighted temple, muttering to himself texts of the ritual. In a small side-temple, dedicated to a holy man—the religious director of the great Sahil-Varman—a bell is rung, and at this signal the whole enclosure wakes to life. The bar is removed from across the open door, the priest chants aloud his invocation, in which the worshippers join, a curious rhythmic cadence, in a plaintive minor key.

The instruments too begin *fortissimo*, almost drowning the wailing voices with their wild uproar; the clang of cymbals, the frenzied ringing of bells, the blare of horns and trumpets, while the air throbs with the beating of the great drums outside the temple. These drums are spoils of war, brought long ago, across a snowy pass, and by perilous hill-paths, from Kishtwar, where the victorious army of Chamba camped for six months before returning with their booty.

While this wild confusion of sound goes on the priest is burning incense at the altar, and folds of dense, white smoke float upwards in front of the idol, veiling the wonderfully human face and the great eyes which, by some device of the man who made them, seem to persistently ignore the worshippers, seeing instead, with startling clearness, a grim jest to which mere human vision is blind.

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They were cunning artificers in these hills a thousand years ago, and they fashioned with wonderful skill this gigantic figure, out of marble brought by the king's son from the sacred slopes of Mount Abu, many hundred miles away. Sahil-Varman had ten sons, and he sent nine of them to bring the marble. They came back with an enormous block, but when it was being cut a frog was found embedded in it. This made it impure, and though parts of it might be used for making smaller deities, another piece must be brought for the giant image of Vishnu. So the nine were sent off again, but the Fates were still against them, for on their way back they were attacked by overpowering numbers and killed in spite of their valiant resistance. The king then sent his only remaining son, who was successful, and returned in safety with a perfect block for the sculptors. The court in front of the temple is paved with marble, perhaps from the first block, gleaming and polished by the feet of centuries of worshippers.

Suddenly the clamour of the instruments stops, the clouds of incense clear away, and one can see the silver with which the carved altar is inlaid, and, high above it, the huge image, resplendent with gilding and colour and hung with masses of flowers, close-strung ropes of narcissus and marigold covering every available

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space, and making besides an archway over the figure. And once again one sees the curious, staring eyes and the gleam of the diamonds on its brow.

Before the altar the priest raises high above his head a small lamp, shaped like a lotus-leaf, emblem of the Sun, and this he revolves slowly seven times from right to left, the way of the Sun; while outside, in the marble court, the worshippers murmur prayers. Then the priest backs towards the door of the shrine, and, still facing the altar, the lamp is again slowly circled seven times, at the end of which he turns to face the entrance and raises the lamp towards the Garud, the bird of Vishnu which stands on a pillar outside the temple.

Again a bell is rung, and the priest makes a circuit of the temple, still going from right to left, and then takes up his place at the door while he circles the lamp again seven times. He then advances to the altar and bows before it, while a bell is rung to show that the ceremony is over. The worshippers now crowd forward to the door and prostrate themselves at the threshold, while a privileged few go inside to say their prayers at the altar. After this the sacred food which has been offered to the shrine is distributed among the worshippers, and the crowd gradually melts away, for night has come and the rising moon is already lighting up the gilded symbols

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which crown the temples, the intricate, lacy pattern of the Sun of Vishnu, and the three-pronged trident of the destroyer, Shiva.

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IN A DOONGA

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I

ARRIVAL

THE route usually chosen by visitors for reaching Kashmir is the Jhelum Valley route, a driving-road entering Kashmir territory at a place called Kohala, after which it follows the course of the Jhelum River for about a hundred miles to Baramulla. This is

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the entrance to the Valley of Kashmir, and here the Jhelum, until now a mountain torrent thundering along steep gorges, widens out into a broad river, navigable for about eighty miles. To go by this route you leave the railway at Rawul Pindi and drive by tonga to Baramulla, where it can be arranged to have a boat waiting for you, on which you may begin the leisurely existence characteristic of one part of Kashmir.

Baramulla will always be marked with a white stone in my memory, because it was the beginning of many months of wandering among the beautiful scenes of Kashmir, as well as for its own charm, its bloom and freshness, and the delicious coolness and purity of its mountain air, so welcome a contrast to the fierce heat of the sun-scorched plains below. When we first saw Baramulla it was white with blossom and the air was filled with fragrance, for all its famous apple orchards were in flower, and pear and peach, apricot and cherry-blossom, made it a dream of beauty.

We reached it one afternoon in early April, weary with our long tonga drive—two restless days of jolting and shaking over one hundred and sixty miles of road, up hill and down dale. It was the day of *Baisakh*, the spring festival of the Hindus, and as we drove along the last half-mile of poplar-bordered level and turned through

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the streets of the little town they were gay with processions of holiday-makers, through which our tonga threaded its way with much tooting on the horn.

Our boat and servants had been engaged for us through a friend, and were to meet us here.

We were driven up to the gate of the Maharaja's rest-house on the river bank, which was crowded with stalwart boatmen, who seemed rather interested in our arrival and anxious to claim us as passengers. From them presently emerged a very small, fat, and rosy boy, who fixed round, inquiring eyes on us, and, without saying a word, took possession of my sunshade and fell in behind us.

"Does he belong to us?" I asked, and was told he was part of our crew. His father now appeared on the scene, an elderly person with one eye and a short beard dyed red, clad in a loose white cotton shirt and flapping *overalls* of the same material, which seemed somewhat inadequate for the climate, since it was a cold and cloudy afternoon. He led us along the river bank, crowded with boats of all sorts, varying from *doongas* of many degrees to the large house-boats in which a pitch of luxury may be arrived at once undreamed of.

Our humble *doonga* was distinguished by a general air of newness and cleanness somewhat lacking in the

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others. We had been very urgent about these points when we wrote to order it, and the result was satisfactory. The matting on its roof was new and golden yellow, a contrast to the greys and drabs of the dingy mats on most of the other boats, and it was gay with muslin blinds freshly dyed in pale shades of pink and mauve and scarlet. The one-eyed one, whose name was Rajba (a name some form of which is given to all those born in the month of Ramazan), and whom we found was our skipper, ushered us into his boat with pride, and his wife rose up from scrubbing the front deck to welcome us. The boarded floors were dark brown and beautifully polished, and a carved pattern ran along the gunwale. Everything seemed absolutely clean, and we quite shared the skipper's pride in our boat, which we named the *Mirliton*, for it was gay and cheap and pretty, and the strips of colour made by the blinds were very suggestive of those carnival toys of the Paris boulevards.

The *doonga* is the boat of the country; an almost flat-bottomed wooden hull surmounted by a wooden frame-work covered with thick mats forming a sort of deck-house. These were once the only living-boats on the river, and are still much used by sportsmen, subalterns, and sometimes even by ladies, though the greater number prefer the house-boats, of recent introduction, which are

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certainly more comfortable, but are also more expensive and less characteristic of the country. House-boats may be lived in elsewhere, but nowhere except in Kashmir can you experience the delights of a *doonga*.

Our boat was about 60 feet long; part of it was divided into four rooms, each about 9 × 12, with wooden partitions between them. There were two long decks fore and aft, partially roofed in and protected by mats; the front deck made a delightful fair-weather sitting-room; on the after-deck lived the boat people. Our rooms were roofed with several layers of matting, and the side-walls were also of matting, arranged to roll up so as to make windows. Inside the matting were muslin blinds, which could also be drawn if necessary, with a gap of about a foot between them and the sloping roof, giving glimpses of the surrounding country. Besides this we had a cook-boat—the same sort of thing as the *doonga*, but on a smaller scale—in which lived our servants, and where the cooking was done.

The furniture consisted of a bath-tub, some wicker and canvas chairs, two wicker tea-tables, a small deal table for meals, a certain amount of crockery, and other necessary articles. We had brought our own camp beds, silver, linen, cooking utensils, and various odds and ends to make the boat comfortable, intending to add to our

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luxuries and decorations in Srinagar, where embroidered felt rugs, fascinating curtains and decorative articles of all sorts can be had in abundance.

For all the magnificence above described, including a crew of four for our own boat and two for the cook-boat, we paid about £3 a month. The crew were supposed to be "able-bodied seamen," but the term is officially allowed to include women and children above the age of twelve; our actual crew consisted, we found, of the skipper, his wife and daughter, and a hireling, who varied from time to time, while the cook-boat was manned by a very ancient mariner and a voluble and rather nice-looking young woman, whose name sounded like Mary, and who was the cook's wife.

While we explored our floating abode, the crew and their friends brought over all our luggage from the tonga, and arranged it about the boat, which, we discovered, had any number of lockers under foot where things could be stored. To arrive at these the boards under your feet are lifted up, making your flooring somewhat rickety, and an incautious step on a loose board will set your best china rattling in an alarming way; but you soon get used to this, and acknowledge that the boat must after all have the defects of its qualities.

Tea was ready by the time our baggage was disposed

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of. A very welcome and festive meal it was in our little sitting-room with its pretty blinds, whence we could watch new-comers, less fortunate than ourselves, wrangling with the boatmen, and attempting—in vain, I am sure—to drive a better bargain than the smiling Kashmiris. Our boat seemed to catch the public eye and be much sought after, and several attempts were made to board it by would-be tenants, unaware that it was already occupied, until they were severely warned off by the skipper's wife, who mounted guard on the bow. We were further enlivened by some excellent buns, bought from a man who paddled alongside in a small boat. He was, we found, a minion of the dak bungalow, who drove a thriving trade with passing boats. He had, doubtless, seen our servant bringing the tea-kettle along the bank from the cook-boat, for he appeared on the scene at exactly the right moment.

During tea we took in with great content the ideal nature of our surroundings. On one side was the bank to which we were moored, an apple orchard in bloom making a fairy-like vista of the foreground; beyond were many miles of green and level meadow-land, from which rose low hills. The soul of spring was everywhere—in the delicate greens of the slim poplars, the varying tints of the young foliage on the other trees, whose leaves

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were not yet large enough to hide the tracery of the branches against the sky, and in the wealth of fruit-

THE TONGA ROAD IN BARAMULLA

blossom, white, or faintly flushed with rose. On the other side were the waters of the Jhelum, a broad and

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placid stream, very different from the foaming tumult of waters we had followed so long on the tonga road, dashing itself impetuously down its rocky channel on its steep descent to the plains more than 5000 feet below.

In our *doonga* the quiet and cessation of motion were delightful after the turmoil of four days in train and tonga. It seemed too at first very strange to be so near the water, for when the side mats are rolled up and the blinds open there is nothing between you and the river any more than if you were on a raft.

Later in the evening we strolled along the roads under the white and scented sweetness of flower-laden branches, through a poplar avenue, and climbed a hill blue with wild forget-me-nots. We had first been to the post office to send a telegram and to make an ineffectual effort to cash a fifty-rupee note, as all our change was exhausted.

With this object we also visited the Kutcherry and the Treasury, and inquired in the small bazaar, establishing, I could see, a most misleading reputation for wealth, and all in vain, for no one could give us so much change. On our return we went, as a last resource, to the dak bungalow, where the *khansama*, a cheery and

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prosperous-looking individual, produced the money at once.

There was no longer any obstacle to continuing our journey, but it was now nearly dark, and there was no moon, so we decided to wait till morning.

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II

UNDER WAY—BARAMULLA TO SRINAGAR

WE left Baramulla about 8 a.m. It had been showery earlier, but now pale gleams of sunlight seemed to promise better things. We tied up at the bank for breakfast two hours later, having

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come about four miles; the crew had theirs at the same time, and halted for at least an hour.

In this lovely and romantic country, if anywhere, does one feel "the passion for perfection," the true artistic attitude towards the Art of Living; and since it adds to the general harmony to have a contented and cheerful environment, we made no attempt to "*hustle the East*," especially as we felt quite unequal to coping with it. When a start was again made we walked for several miles to get warm; it was a chilly day with a stinging wind. Our way was bordered with young willows, and slightly raised above the surrounding country. One had to be "very handy with one's feet" to keep from stepping on thousands of tiny frogs, who leaped about the path in a panic-stricken manner. The land all round was almost a marsh from the effect of the flood of the previous year and the newly melted winter snow.

That evening we arrived at Sopor, where we tied up for the night. This is a large village of over a thousand houses. Our first view of it was of a mass of mud huts looking like an outgrowth of the steep brown bank, rising in a peaked, uneven outline of gabled roofs against the stormy sky. As we looked it was swept by a yellow wave of sunlight which painted it like a pale ivory carving on a background of indigo storm-clouds, through

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rents in which gleamed the snowy heights of the northern ranges.

Sopor is at the entrance to the Wular Lake, the passage of which is often dangerous because of the sudden storms which sweep over it; and at this time of year the boatmen will rarely cross it, going instead by a side-canal. As we neared Sopor the afternoon turned stormy and bitterly cold, with violent bursts of wind and driving rain. We shut up our little sitting-room, except for a few inches of window, put on all our warmest wraps, and with *kangras* (the Kashmiri fire-basket) at our feet devoted our energies to keeping warm, while I read in our guide-book how, near this place, a former ruler of Kashmir nearly lost his life in attempting to cross the Wular Lake in a storm, while three hundred boatloads of his followers were wrecked. Just at this point in my reading a gust of wind struck our exceedingly top-heavy *doonga*, making it lean over in a most alarming way, and the door opened to admit the skipper, who seemed rather perturbed, and proceeded to fasten down our only window and secure things in general with bits of string. A crisis of some sort seemed to be going on, so we left the Stygian darkness of our *salon* and moved on to the front deck to watch events. Fortunately we were very near the bank, where the river was very shallow. The wind blew

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from the shore, and on the opposite side of our *doonga* we saw the whole crew, including the cook and the valiant Mary, standing in the river and pushing against the boat with all their might to counteract the force of the wind. At last, in intervals between the gusts, they succeeded in towing us into a sheltered place, where we moored for the night.

Later we heard of two impulsive sahibs travelling at the same time who, considering any yielding to the boatmen a sign of weakness, had insisted on crossing the lake, were caught in the storm, overturned, lost some baggage, and had altogether a rather "paltry" time.

The old name of Sopor was Suryapur, the town of Surya, who combined the professions of engineer and sage about a thousand years ago, and had a great reputation. It is told of him that when the river was flooded because it was choked by rocks, he put an end to the flood by having several boatloads of money thrown into the water. The banks were thronged with people to watch so irregular a proceeding, who dived in after the money, and in the course of their efforts to find it cleared the bed of the river.

It was too cold and wet for us to explore Sopor, but we saw the ruins of a fort built by Golab Singh, the first of the Sikh rulers of Kashmir. We could not help seeing

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this, as we were tied up almost opposite. The next day was clear and sunny, and the boat started before we were up. It was warm enough to spend the whole day on the front deck, where we could fully realise how ideal a mode of travelling this is. The average pace of the boat is about two miles an hour, which makes you almost feel you are not travelling at all, except for the gradually changing landscape. The smooth water below, the varying April sky above, the splendid exhilaration of the air —mountain air with a dash of spring—this wonderful world of snowy peaks and violet-shadowed hills, of green meadow-land and flower-decked banks—all this was our own, emptied of all other human beings to contest our right to it; the only people in sight, those distant figures on the towing-path, headed by the infant in a fluttering scarlet garment, looking at this distance like a large and animated poppy.

So in great content we proceeded on our way, trying to decide whether yesterday, with its storms and wonderful skies, or to-day's serenity of sunshine were more beautiful. We passed Sumbal about midday, where there is one of the curious bridges typical of Kashmir. There is good fishing here later in the year, in the mulberry season.

After Sumbal the mountains approach closer to the

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bank, and a small conical hill rises very abruptly near by. This is called Aha Thang, and behind it lies the little Manasbal Lake. We put off visiting this lake till later, as it was famous, we were told, for its lotus flowers, which

AT SOPOR

bloom early in July. When we did go there on the 30th of June, it was a breathless day of blazing heat, with the thermometer in the nineties. We had not realised how hot it would be, expecting somehow to find April weather still lingering in the spot we had passed in April.

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I had arranged to make cherry jam that day—not the coolest occupation in the world; but the cherries were there, everything was ready, and it was not to be evaded. How hot it was, even in my thinnest muslin frock, as I finished, and wondered if I could ever again find fascination in cherry jam. Our anchoring place was to be under a *fakir's* garden, we were told, famed for its fruit; but as we turned a corner—below the ruins of a Moghul summer-house—we came upon another *doonga*, its occupant a man in his shirt-sleeves, who seemed to be pursuing coolness on his front deck. There was no room for our boat, so we had to seek another harbour further on.

The little lake is very lovely; its waters of a most translucent clearness, so that the boat seems to float in mid-air, there is so intangible a line between the elements. But alas! there was never a lotus. They said the reason of this was that in the scarcity which followed the flood of the previous year, the starving people had eaten the roots when all else failed. We had meant to spend some days here, but the heat and airlessness—it was very shut in—and the clouds of mosquitoes as the sun went down, defeated us; so taking advantage of the moonlight, we went back to the more open river, leaving the tenant of the other *doonga* whistling "Kathleen Mavourneen" undeterred by mosquitoes.

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To return to April and our journey up the river through those days of varying loveliness. Everywhere there was colour. The level fields were gay with golden, quivering stretches of flowering mustard; the misty grey of the willows near the bank contrasted exquisitely with the delicate vividness of the new greens decking the poplar trees, and the bronzes and purples of the unfolding leaf-buds on the great *chinars*. Beyond were the hills shadowed deep with wonderful rich tones of violet and azure, and above their forest-covered slopes towered the whiteness of the higher ranges and their gleaming fields of snow.

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III

TO SRINAGAR

OUR last halting-place before reaching Srinagar was Shadipore, a small village with beautiful groves of chinar trees near by and a distant vista of hills and snows, at the junction of the Sindh

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river with the Jhelum. There is good fishing near here in May and June, and the way up the Sindh from here to Ganderbal (about fourteen miles) is very pretty, with lovely mountain views. Ganderbal is the first stage on the road to Leh over the Zoji La Pass, and is besides a favourite camping-ground in the summer, as it is cooler than anywhere on the Jhelum.

From Shadipore to Srinagar the scenery is not very interesting till one gets right up to the beginning of the city, where the accumulation of suspended traffic and picturesque life on the banks of the river make a varying and fascinating scene. The round-limbed, rosy children playing on the bank, and their smiling, graceful mothers, whose level brows, beautiful eyes, and finely chiselled features would be noticeable in any country, make a succession of charming pictures as they come down to fetch water or to bathe their babies in the muddy and incredibly dirty stream which the Jhelum is at Srinagar. Behind this foreground of gay humanity are the gable-roofed, many-windowed houses, projecting balconies, and delicately carved lattices of the city, with here and there, rising above the general irregularity of outline, the cone-shaped dome of a Hindu temple, or the square, pagoda-like top of a Mahomedan *ziarat* (shrine of a saint), covered with turf and gay with the flowers of iris or red lilies,

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THE HOUSE OF A WAZIR

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while in places fruit trees or groups of poplars mark where gardens are.

Going up the river one passes first under the seventh bridge, the *Saif Kadal*, the bridge of Saif Khan, who built the original one here in 1664 in the days of the great Moghuls. Since then all the bridges have been destroyed more than once by floods or fires, but the new ones seem always to have been built at the same places.

We reached the Saif Kadal about 3 p.m., and sat on the deck absorbed in watching the spectacle of the banks and the passing boats, as our *doonga* made its leisurely way up the river. Our skipper was evidently well known, and hailed with many greetings from the banks and the bridges covered with loungers. We felt we were being examined with great interest, while no doubt our tempers, manners, and customs, and above all our finances, were discussed and commented upon.

Below the fifth bridge we passed the *Bulbul Lankar*, a mosque which was built early in the fourteenth century for a saint named Bulbul Shah, by the first of the Mahomedan kings of Kashmir. This prince, Rynchan Shah, was an adventurer, whose father had been king of Tibet, and his history is the sort of thing which in one's childhood one always expected of princes who went out to seek their fortunes. Kashmir was then in great

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disorder from weak kings, ambitious subjects, and changes of faith, for Hinduism and Buddhism were being undermined by the preaching of Mahomedans from Central and Western Asia. Rynchan Shah saw his chance, came to Kashmir, and won a kingdom, a princess, and a religion, the religion he selected being that of Bulbul Shah, whom he admired to the pitch of imitating.

The fourth bridge is named the *Zaina Kadal*, after Zain-ul-ab-din, one of the greatest of the kings of Kashmir. He was a wise and tolerant monarch, who persecuted no religion, who made great conquests—among others Tibet—was a patron of art and letters, and built many magnificent palaces and useful public works.

Near the first bridge, the Amira Kadal, we saw the great pile of the Maharaja's palace, with its spacious carved verandas overhanging the river, and the gold-roofed Sikh temple beside it. Here the banks are lined with the state barges, most of them at present covered up in their winter matting.

Near the palace we turned off to the left, up a side canal, which presently became shaded by enormous overhanging chinar trees with, beyond them, stretches of green turf. Here were moored many *doongas* and house-boats, most of them unmistakably occupied. It looked a delightful spot to spend a few days in, and

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a good centre for sight-seeing, so we suggested that we should tie up here. But our skipper told us that this attractive spot was reserved for bachelors and *sahibs* alone; and we had to move further on. So we kept on our way, tying up at last just outside the Dal Darwaza, the huge lock gates leading into the Dal Lake, and next day moved to a beautiful camping-ground in the lake itself.

One can take life in Srinagar in many different ways. People who go there for "the season" usually live in a large, well-appointed house-boat, make and return calls, spend their afternoons on the polo-ground, tennis-courts, or golf-links, ending up with tea at the club overlooking the river, or have picnics at one of the delightful resorts on the Dal Lake. Dinner parties and dances are also of frequent occurrence, and towards the end of June, when Srinagar grows too hot to be agreeable, they transfer themselves to Gulmarg in the mountains, where the same life goes on in the midst of beautiful scenery and a cool climate, whose delights are only dashed by the somewhat frequent rain.

For those who go to Kashmir to shoot, Srinagar is regarded merely as a base of supplies in which to waste as little time as possible. They lay in camp equipment and stores with the utmost dispatch and vanish into the

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unknown, to reappear when their leave is up, sun-burned exceedingly, their baggage unwieldy and protruding with skins and horns, and a look of utter beatitude on their faces.

A long stay in Srinagar has a way of reducing you, by imperceptible degrees, to bankruptcy if you do not put on the curb early in your career; there are so many things, undreamed of before, which suddenly become indispensable to your happiness. You are driven to find safety in flight and to go on up the river to Islamabad, or to take to tents and a life of wandering so delightful that one almost forgets the charm of the valley.

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A MOGHUL GARDEN

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A MOGHUL GARDEN

THE Emperor Akbar had little time to spare from his work of making his empire in India for the fairest of all his conquests, the Valley of Kashmir. Still, in the course of his three brief visits he left a lasting impression on it. The revenue settlement of the province, made by his great finance minister, Raja Todar Mull, and the fort on the hill of *Hari Parbat*, looking down on Srinagar, are emblems of his strong administration, both military and civil.

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But the great Akbar had his gentler side, a touch of the poetic nature so strong in his grandfather Baber, and it is to him that Srinagar owes the Garden of the Morning Wind, the Nasim Bagh, that stately pleasaunce, planted with chinar trees, on the shores of the Dal, a lake whose loveliness can scarcely have an equal. Whether, in the sunshine of an afternoon of early spring, it mirrors in dreamy beauty the snow-crowned peaks that guard it, the willow and poplar groves of the gardens fringing its banks, and the clouds that march in white procession along the hill-tops; or when the hills are dark with storm it lies in their midst, a still sheet of grey and silver; whether serene in sunset, or sparkling in the morning light—it has always some new beauty to enchant one.

The lake lies north of the city of Srinagar, and, to visit it, one goes up the Dal Canal which connects it with the river. This canal is entered by massive lock gates on the right bank of the Jhelum, a little above the Residency. After the gate the canal goes through the open green spaces of the English quarter, the high *bund* (embankment) on the left lined with tall poplars, while, on the right, rise the steep, bare slopes of the Takht-i-Sulaiman, the Throne of Solomon, a rocky hill rising about a thousand feet above the level of

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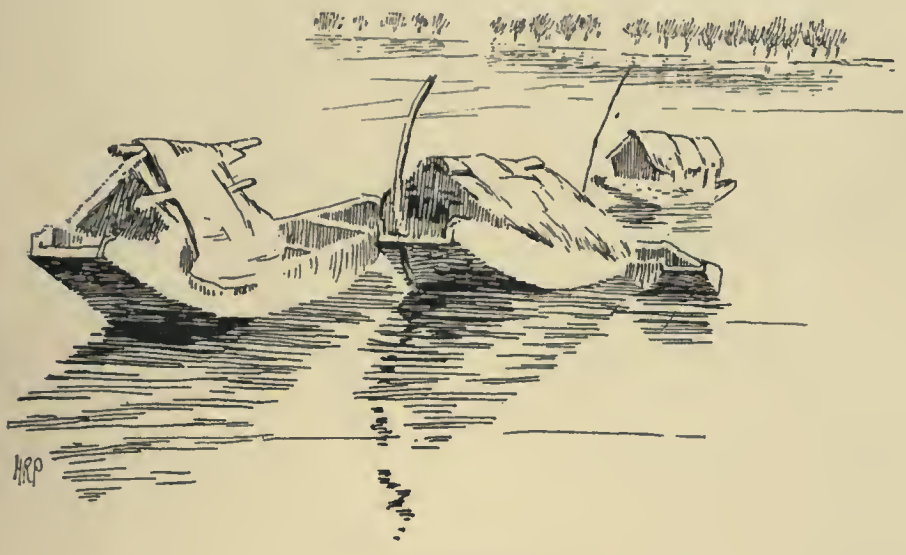
the city. As one nears the lake the canal, which is a narrow one, becomes more and more crowded; in one place, where the banks are low and marshy, there are numbers of grain barges drawn up on both sides, closely packed, and often almost entirely blocking the



GRAIN BARGES

narrow channel. Through these one's little boat picks a careful way, cleverly evading the advancing bulk of a timber or grain barge on the move, which it would be suicidal to collide with. The boatmen of Kashmir are as clever in managing their craft as the gondoliers of Venice in their narrow canals, and one usually emerges safely from the riskiest of situations.

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Below a rocky spur of the Takht-i-Sulaiman there is another ponderous gateway, through which one passes into the lake. When the river is low the water rushes through this with great force; there are iron chains which the boatmen hold on by to pull the boat through, and, with any luck, you may escape being swamped and emerge safely on the other side, but it is perhaps wiser to get out and walk over the bridge, taking your best cushions and other belongings with you, as even if you escape being capsized you are apt to get rather wet.

After the exciting passage of the gate all is peace—the translucent clearness, the still beauty, of the reed-fringed waterways of the Dal. To visit the Nasim Bagh your boatman will probably turn to the left, up one of the many narrow channels among the floating gardens for which the lake is famous. They are, however, far less romantic than they sound, their products being limited to vegetable marrows, melons, cucumbers, and other eminently sensible articles of food. The gardeners of the Dal are more strictly utilitarian than the Japanese, whose floating gardens are less for use than beauty, and of whom it is told that in the time of a great famine an imperial edict forbade the cultivation of anything that was not good for food. This caused the greatest dismay, and a petition was sent to the Mikado asking that the ban

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might at least be removed from the iris of their floating gardens, for the complexion powder used by the women was made from it. "We must die any way," they said. "Let us at least die looking our best." And it is said that the petition was granted.

But these floating gardens of Kashmir, islands of vivid green in the clear, still water, with their background

A GARDENER OF THE DAL

of young poplars and softly shadowed hillsides, have a beauty of their own. The little willows that border them are amusingly decorative, pollarded till they look like a fluffy ball of greyish-green on a short, stout handle. They are very absurd, these little willows, which, in spite of all their efforts, can never live up to their reputation and be the weeping willows their name demands. How could it be possible under the circumstances? The dancing ripples

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on the water, the radiant sky, the light spring breezes are all against it, and make any attempt at a melancholy pose utterly ridiculous, so they seem to have given it up, their branches stick out at all sorts of *retroussé* angles, or boldly take a skyward instead of a downward curve, while their leaves flutter gaily to the tune of the ripples.

The devious course your boat follows will take you through a little village with the usual *ziarat*—a Mahomedan shrine—its architecture a cross between a mosque, a log-hut, and a pagoda. On the turf-covered roof the iris is in flower, a field of white with one tall scarlet tulip swaying on its stem, distinct against the sapphire sky. Then you go under an arched stone bridge, past a flight of steps, where a group of red-robed Pundit-anis (Hindoo women) are washing their clothes and their babies; then more floating gardens, till you emerge on a clear sheet of blue water beyond which lies the Nasim Bagh.

The great Akbar chose well the site of his garden, for, from here, the view over the lake is unsurpassed. In the garden itself, whatever there may originally have been in the way of stone-paved tanks and masonry balustrades, of hewn terraces and arranged flower-beds, has been destroyed by the jealousy of later Pathan rulers, or smoothed away by Time. Stately aisles of magnifi-

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cent chinar trees, fit monument to the greatest of the Moghuls, are all that remain of Akbar's garden. But the kindly hand of Nature has been at work, and one cannot help feeling glad that there is no petty ornament made by man to distract one's attention, or to spoil the lovely slopes of rich, velvety turf, from which the clumps of purple and white iris—the fleur-de-lis of France—lift their beautiful heads while the air is faintly sweet with their scent.

On Friday mornings in early spring the devout Mahomedans of the city of Srinagar visit the lake in great numbers, for the most famous Moslem shrine in Kashmir is the *ziarat* and mosque of Hazrat Bal, on the shore of the lake, about half a mile from the Nasim Bagh. Here the faithful go to pray, and, on great occasions, the sacred relics of the Prophet which are supposed to be kept here are shown to them. Their devotions finished, the rest of the day is spent in visiting the famous gardens—there are two others besides the Nasim Bagh, called the Shalimar and the Nishat Bagh —and admiring the scenery of the lake.

The Kashmiris, with their strong artistic instincts, seem to be keenly alive to the beauties of Nature. The pilgrimage to Hazrat Bal is most popular in spring, for it is then that the orchards near it and their hedges of lilac

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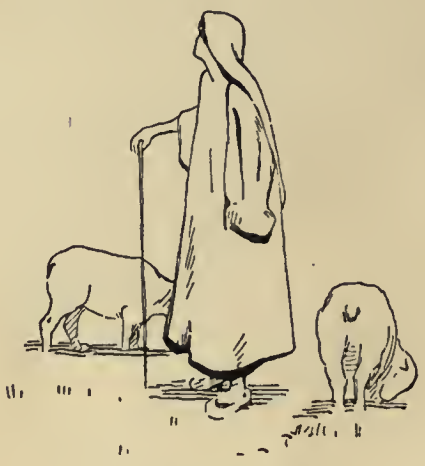
are in flower. You will see quiet groups of people of all ages silently gazing at the lovely aisles of delicate blossom, making white archways faintly flushed with rose between the beauty of the earth touched with the hand of spring and the changing April sky.

One wonders if it is in this way that the grace and



IN A KASHMIR MEADOW

charm of the thousand patterns they trace, in embroidery and carving, in copper and silver, are evolved; from the study of the lines of branch and flower against the sky, from the grace of stately iris or of curving lotus stem.

There is a feeling of festival in the air on a radiant April morning, and the picturesque boat-loads one passes,

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A STORMY SUNSET
ON THE DAL LAKE

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all evidently thoroughly awake to the joy of life, add a vivid human interest to the scene.

The different boat-loads one sees on Friday mornings are very interesting. Some seem to contain a family party out for the day. Fore and aft are bunches of iris or lilac, and in front of the boat is hung a cage of singing birds—poor captives who, after being cooped up so long in the crowded alleys of the city, are to share the pleasures of a day in the country. The boat is open from end to end, the sides are cushioned, and floor and cushions are covered with thick white Yarkandi *numdahs* (felt rugs). The meals are cooked in the stern of the boat, while in the centre is the large polished samovar, in which tea will presently be brewed and served in little green or blue china bowls; with it will be served small round biscuits—sweet ones to-day, for is it not a holiday? These will no doubt be bought at one of the bun-shops near the shrine, which do a great trade on these days.

After their prayers have been said in the mosque they will go on round the lake, through the one-arched bridge that, from the top of the Takht-i-Sulaiman, looks like a gipsy ring set with a single diamond. Then they will land at the Nishat Bagh, with its sloping terraces and flower beds, to admire the view of the lake. But, first of all,

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they will go to the Shalimar Garden, built for the most beautiful of Eastern queens by the Moghul, who loved Kashmir almost better than he loved her. Here the children will wonder at the funny little round fountains, and wish that the Maharaja had ordered them to play to-day, so that they might see the water rise out of the masonry cones, and make a silvery mist in the air under the flowering apple and pear trees.

Then there will be the long way home—all too short it will seem!—in the afternoon sunlight, under the frowning spur where stands the strange, wild *Peri Mahal*, the "Fairies' Palace"; through a gap in the nearer hills they will have a glimpse of exquisite snowy peaks, and pass on to the vineyards of Gupkar and the rocky promontory of Gagribal, where the water is so clear and soft that it is said the softness of the famous shawls of Kashmir was due to their being washed in this water. After this will come the quiet canals bordered with floating gardens, the clear water reflecting the lovely sunset colouring of the surrounding hills; then, through the picturesque but miry *Nalla Mar*, to their homes.

A great many parties are arranged for the day by the more wealthy Mahomedans, who hire large boats to entertain their guests in, and hundreds of these visit the shrine in the course of the day.

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But at evening all is peace again at the Nasim Bagh, when the sound of the paddles of the holiday-makers has died away in the distance. It is dark in the shadow of the great chinar trees—a fragrant darkness, sweet with the breath of the white iris which stars the gloom. Far in the west, against the pale saffron of the sunset sky, the hill crowned with Akbar's fort stands out faintly violet, and over its peaked summit glimmers the evening star.

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My best thanks are due to Mr. G. M. Chesney, the Editor of the *Pioneer*, Allahabad, for his kindness in allowing me to publish a number of these articles which I contributed to the *Pioneer* in 1904, 1905, and 1906.

P. PIRIE.

Badshah Bagh,
Lucknow,
India.

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